



The Right Rev^d. Father in God
Richard Challoner, DD.
BISHOP of DEBRA,
and Vicar Apostolic &c.

London Published April 23, 1784, at the sign of the Star by J.P. Coghill Duke St., Gravenor Square.



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CONSIDERATIONS
UPON
CHRISTIAN TRUTHS
AND
CHRISTIAN DUTIES;
DIGESTED INTO
MEDITATIONS
FOR
EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

By the Venerable and Right Reverend
DR. RICHARD CHALLONER,
BISHOP of DEBRA, and V. A.

PART I.
FROM NEW-YEAR'S-DAY TO HOLY SATURDAY.

Blessed is the man—whose will is in the law of the Lord, and he shall meditate on his law day and night.

And he shall be like a tree, which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruits in due season.

And his leaf shall not fall off, and all whatsoever he shall do, shall prosper. Psalm i. 1, 2, 3.



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A U T H O R ' S P R E F A C E .

DEAR READER,

I Here present thee with a set of Meditations, for every day in the year, collected from the word of God, and the writings of the Saints, and servants of God. The subjects are digested in such manner as to take in the whole Christian doctrine, with all the mysteries and solemnities celebrated by the church throughout the year, and all the practical lessons of the Gospel. The great truths of the Christian religion are here briefly proposed; in their own plain native colours: upon every subject there are three considerations, which may serve to entertain the devout Christian for half an hour, or longer, according to the time he allows himself for the exercise of daily meditation: and every meditation is concluded with pious resolutions, which may determine the soul to decline with all her strength for the time to come, from all evil, and to dedicate herself in good earnest to the love and service of her Maker, by a serious application of all her powers to good.

As to the preparation, that ought always to be premised; to avoid needless repetitions, I have not marked it down, at the beginning of each meditation, but must here put thee in mind, once for all, that thou must ever begin this exercise, by the faith and remembrance of the presence of God; and by humbly imploring his light, grace, and assistance.

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assistance. Thou must also observe, that these considerations are not designed to be a matter of barren study, or speculation of the brain; but to be the seeds of pious affections in the heart: which affections are looked upon by spiritual writers as the principal part of mental prayer; as tending directly to bring the soul to her God, and to unite her to him, by divine love. I have not set down, upon each subject, all the various affections, that might be drawn from every consideration; as well because this would have been an endless work, and liable to frequent repetitions; as because these affections are usually taught, by a better master, viz. the Spirit of God, to all such as diligently frequent his school, which he holds, in the interior of those souls, that seriously exercise themselves in mental prayer.

However, as it may be of some help to many, especially to beginners, I shall here point out the different kinds of affections, which may be excited in the soul, according to the different subjects of her meditations, and the degrees of her advancement in a spiritual life. Such are, 1. Acts of a lively *faith* of the divine truths, set before the soul in the considerations; and a bowing down of all the powers of the soul to adore the sovereign Truth, that is thus pleased to reveal himself to little ones. 2. Acts of *fear* of the judgments of God; of his wrath enkindled against impenitent sinners; and of all the dreadful consequences of sin, and the punishments inflicted upon it by divine justice, both in this world, and in the world to come. 3. Acts of *hope*, and confidence in the power, mercy, and goodness of God, represented in the meditation; in the fidelity of his divine promises, made in favour of penitent sinners; and in the inexhaustible treasure

sures of merit and grace, purchased for us all, by the labours, sufferings and death of the Son of God.

4. Acts of the *love* of God, from the consideration of the goodness of God in himself, of all his divine attributes, beauty and perfections; of his eternal love for us, and of all his benefits to us; and of the passion and death of his Son, for the love of us.

5. Acts of *shame* and *confusion* for our manifold sins, against his infinite goodness; and for our base ingratitude, by which we have returned so much evil, for so much good.

6. Acts of *repentance* and contrition for our sins; and of an humble accusation of them all, at the feet of Christ; of a horror and hatred for them; and even a hatred of ourselves, for having been so base and wicked; with earnest supplications for mercy, for what is past; and an offering of ourselves to a penitential life, for the time to come.

7. Acts of *adoration* of the divine majesty; of *praise* and *thanksgiving* to him, for all his benefits; of *invitation* of all the Angels and Saints, and of all his works to glorify him; and of an *oblation* of our whole being, and of all that we have, to his glory.

8. Acts of *joy* in him, and of *congratulation* with him, that he is, what he is; of *zeal* for the greater glory of his name, for the advancement of his kingdom, and the executing of his will; of *desire* that all the world may be converted to him; and that all may know him, love him, and serve him.

9. Acts of *humility*, and *contempt* of ourselves; of embracing the cross, and of *resignation* to God's blessed will in all things; and of a total *dedication* and *consecration* of ourselves to be the servants of his divine love.

10. Acts of *desire* to *imitate* the virtues of our dear Redeemer, of his blessed Mother, and of all the Saints, to attend to his heavenly lessons; to imprint them deeply

ly in our hearts; and to sigh continually after him. 11. Acts of *compassion* for our Lord in his sufferings; with a great sense, of what he has endured for us; and of all the outrages, that are daily offered him by wilful sinners. 12. Acts of a general *flight*, and abhorrence of all evil; and resolutions to embrace and follow all Christian virtues. Lastly, fervent petitions, and prayers, for the divine grace and assistance, in all things.

These affections may also be exercised, in the way of *colloquies* with our Lord, or with his Saints, according to the exigence of the subject; sometimes treating with him, as with a parent; other times as with a friend, or a spouse: other times as with our physician, representing to him all the maladies of our soul; at other times casting ourselves at his feet, like Magdalene, making a general confession of all our sins to him, as to our high-priest; and the true pastor of our souls, &c. Ever representing him as near us; or rather as within us, and in the very centre of our being; and treating with him, as we would do, if we saw him visibly present with us: and ever concluding our addresses to him, with an oblation of our whole selves to him, to execute all his wills.

As to the necessity of this holy exercise of meditation, and the great advantages of the daily practice of it; I shall refer thee to what thou wilt find below, under the heads of *consideration* and *mental prayer*: and I shall only add here, that a diligence, in this exercise, is the great means to bring all good to the soul; and to conduct her safe to her Sovereign Good. The devil, who very well knows that such souls, as apply themselves seriously to mental prayer, will be none of his, makes all possible efforts to divert Christians from this application, by a thousand

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thousand impostures; and to frighten them with phantoms of imaginary difficulties: but this very opposition of his ought to convince us of the great importance of this exercise; and to make us more eager to pursue it, in spite of all his lies and deceits. He pretends, the practice of mental prayer is not for all, but only for such as live in convents or colleges; that it requires wit and learning; and that the exercise of it is very difficult, &c. But all this is nothing but a delusion, it is all imposition and lies. Mental prayer, by the way of meditation, is very easy, even to the meanest capacities; it requires nothing but a good will, and a sincere desire, of conversing with God, by thinking of him, and loving him. In effect, the great business of mental prayer is *thinking* and *loving*: and who is there that can even live without *thinking* and *loving*? But then in mental prayer, the *thinking* and *loving* is not confined to such narrow limits, or mean objects, as the thoughts and affections of worldlings are, which lie always groveling upon the earth: but it has an immense field, opened for its entertainment, of great and everlasting truths, and such as are both highly moving, and of infinite importance to us all; and of great and eternal goods, together with the way to make them all our own.

As to the difficulty, objected to mental prayer, from the opportunity of distractions, and the dryness and indevotion, that many find therein: it must be allowed, that in order to make any progress, in this exercise, the Christian must do his part, in removing the occasions of these distractions; as well by maintaining a purity of conscience; as by retrenching all inordinate affections to creatures, (for where the treasure is, there the heart and thought will be;) and by restraining the mind,

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at other times, from idle and impertinent amusements, and from that continual dissipation of thought, in which too many Christians pass their days. But then, for our comfort, where we endeavour to follow these rules; the involuntary distractions, or dryness, which we find in prayer, will not be imputed to us; nor hinder our prayer from being acceptable to God; and though less pleasant, highly advantageous to ourselves. And what matter is it, whether we please ourselves or no, provided we please our God, and do his will? This we may assure ourselves of, that if we continue faithful in attending, as it were, daily upon him, by this exercise of mental prayer, in spite of all this dryness, and opposition of the devil, and of our own weakness and corruption, we shall not fail of coming, sooner or later, to taste of the excellent fruits, that ever grow upon this tree of life.

I will add no more, by way of preface, but only beg of thee, resolutely to undertake, and constantly to persevere, in this heavenly exercise of mental prayer, in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil. What thou art seeking after is a treasure of infinite value: if it costs thee some pains in digging for it, it will abundantly recompense all thy labour. This exercise is the true Christian *philosophy*, consisting in the search, and love of *true wisdom*; even that wisdom, which is so much extolled by the Spirit of God, in holy writ; and which comes down from God, and carries us up to God: This is *the science of the Saints*.

C O N S I.



CONSIDERATIONS
ON
CHRISTIAN TRUTHS, AND CHRISTIAN DUTIES;
OR
MEDITATIONS
FOR EVERY DAY IN THE YEAR.

JANUARY 1.

ON NEW-YEAR'S DAY.

CONSIDER first, that on this day, we keep the octave of the birth of Christ, together with the festivity of his Circumcision; when being yet but eight days old, he began to shed his sacred blood, in obedience to his Father's will; subjecting himself to that most painful, and most humbling ceremony, and bearing therein the resemblance of a criminal, as if he, like the rest, had stood in need of the circumcising knife for the expiation of sin. Christians, learn here from your infant Saviour, the lessons he desires to teach you in his circumcision: his unparalleled humility, his perfect obedience and conformity to his Father's will, his patience in suffering, and his ardent love and charity for us. He came to discharge the immense debt we owed by our sins to his Father's justice, by shedding the last drop of his blood in expiation for them; and behold he has here given us an earnest of this payment, by submitting himself this day to the knife of circumcision.

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Consider

Consider 2dly, and set before your eyes this divine infant, this innocent lamb of God, this beloved of your souls, beautiful beyond the children of men, all embrued in his own most sacred blood; and suffering in that tender age the cruel smart of a most sensible wound. O how sensible indeed to him! O how sensible to the loving heart of his blessed Virgin Mother! See with what affection she embraces him! See with what anguish of heart she bewails his sufferings! See with what tender compassion she strives to afford him all the comfort she is able! Learn of her the like affections of love and compassion for your suffering Lord. O my soul, embrace with her thy infant Saviour, bleeding for thee. *A bloody spouse art thou to me, said Sephora to Moses, Exodus iv. 25.* when to deliver him from the hand of the Angel that threatened him with death, she touched his feet with the blood of her child, whom she had just then circumcised. O how truly is our dear Redeemer a *sponsus sanguinum, a bloody spouse* to our souls, for whom he gives now these first fruits of his blood, and for whom he will one day give all his blood, to rescue us from the hand of the destroying angel! O blessed be his divine charity for ever!

Consider 3dly, that it is the duty of all Christians to imitate our Lord's circumcision, by a spiritual circumcising of the heart: which God so often calls for in the scriptures; and always preferred before the carnal circumcision. This spiritual circumcision requires of us a cutting off, or retrenching, all disorderly affections to the world and its pomps; to the mammon of iniquity, and to the flesh and its lusts; and a serious application of our souls to a daily mortification of our passions, and corrupt inclinations: my soul, let us heartily embrace, and daily put in practice, this circumcision of the hearts.

Conclude to make a return of thy heart to thy infant Saviour, who began on this day to shed his blood for thee: but see it be a heart purified by a spiritual circumcision, from all such affections as are disagreeable to him.

JAN. 2. *On beginning a new life with the new year.*

CONSIDER first, how many years of your life are now past and gone: how long it is since you first came

to



to the knowledge of good and evil: and in what manner you have spent all this precious time, given you for no other end but that you might employ it in the love and service of your God; and in securing the salvation of your immortal souls. Alas! have any of these past years been spent in such a manner as to answer this great end? Is not that one and only business for which you came into this world still to be begun? Have not all these years, which one after another have flowed away into the gulph of eternity, been utterly lost to your souls? It is well if they have not: considering how soon the greatest part of Christians, after their coming to the use of reason, fall from the grace of their baptism; how quickly they give themselves up to follow the bent of their corrupt inclinations and passions: and in what a forgetfulness of God they generally pass their days. Ah! my soul, what a sad thing would it be, if, during all these years, thou hast hitherto lived, instead of storing up provisions for a happy eternity, thou hast been only *treasuring up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath?*

Consider 3dly, the present state and condition of your conscience. What is your life at present? How stand accounts between your soul and God? What would you think, if this day you were to be called to the bar of divine justice? Should you not earnestly desire a delay? Alas! how few live in the manner in which they would be glad to be found, when death shall overtake them. And yet they are not ignorant, that death generally comes when least expected; and that generally speaking as men live, so they die. Ah! my soul, deceive not thyself, nor suffer thyself to be imposed upon by the enemy. Thy time in all appearance will be much shorter than thou art willing to think: this very year perhaps may be thy last: it will certainly be so to many thousands, who expect it as little as thyself. Set then thy house in order now: begin this very day to rectify the whole state of thy interior: and live hence-forward as thou desirest to die. There cannot be too great a security where eternity is at stake.

Consider 4dly, that the mercy of God has born with you for so many years past; and notwithstanding all the

provocations of your repeated crimes, and perpetual ingratitude, has brought you now to the beginning of this new year, out of a sincere desire, that now at least you might begin a new life, and such a life as might secure to your souls that true life which never ends. You have been, alas! like the barren *fig-tree, planted in his vineyard*, which hitherto has brought forth nothing but leaves: but see, he is willing to try you once more, in hopes of your doing better, for the future, and to manure you a little while longer with his word, his graces, and his sacraments. But O take care to disappoint him no more, by refusing him the fruits he expects of a thorough amendment of life: lest he pass an irrevocable sentence, for the barren tree to be cut down, and cast into the fire.

Conclude to begin from this very hour, to turn away from sin; and to dedicate yourselves hence-forward in good earnest to the love and service of your God. Alas! how few Christians seem to be truly in earnest in this greatest of all concerns, where their all is at stake for eternity.

JAN. 3. *On the rules of a new life.*

CONSIDER first, that in the epistle which is read on New-Year's-Day, *Titus ii. 11--15.* the Apostle has in a few words declared to us the rules we are to follow in our lives, in consequence of the Son of God's coming amongst us: viz. what we are to renounce; what we are to practise; what we are to look for; and what we are to tend to. *The grace of God our Saviour, hath appeared to all men: instructing us, that denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly and godly in this world; looking for that blessed hope, and the coming of the glory of that great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a purser of good works.* O how many great lessons are here contained in a few words! Let us reflect on them one after another.

Consider therefore, 2dly, the end for which our God and Saviour came down amongst us, by the mystery of his Incarnation;

carnation; enlightened us by his Gospel and by his life; and at length offered himself in sacrifice for us, by his death upon the cross. *He gave himself for us,* saith the Apostle, *that he might redeem us from all iniquity:* by setting us at liberty from being slaves to Satan, sin, and hell: by breaking in funder all the chains of our vices and passions; and by purchasing all mercy, grace and salvation for us; to the end that, by the virtue of his precious blood, he might cleanse us for himself, and make us *an acceptable people, (a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, 1 Peter ii. 9.)* a zealous pursuer of all good works. See Christians what kind of men we ought to be, in consequence of what the Son of God has done for us, in coming down from heaven for us, and laying down his life for us. O let us never more degenerate by leading lives unworthy of him! Let us never more return to our former slavery.

Consider 3dly, that being purchased by the Son of God with so great a price, we are to consider ourselves hence forward as his property; and therefore we must not pretend to dispose of ourselves, any otherwise than according to his will and pleasure. This ought to be our rule in all we do; this we ought to consult in all our deliberations; this holy will of him that has bought us with his own blood, should be in every thing a law to us; so as ever to renounce all that we know to be displeasing to him; and ever to pursue with all our strength, what we know to be agreeable to him. *You are not your own: you are bought with a great price,* says the Apostle, *1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Glorify, and bear God in your body.*

Conclude to take in practice for the rule of your life, this holy will of your Redeemer, according to the whole extent of the Apostle's exposition and declaration of the Christian's rule, *Titus ii. 11. &c.* and you will be religious men indeed, of that excellent order which Jesus Christ came from heaven to institute; and you will be with him for ever.

JAN. 4. *On what we are to renounce by the Christian's rule.*

CONSIDER first, that in consequence of our redemption through Jesus Christ, we are bound by

the tenour of our rule above rehearsed, to deny; that is, to renounce, all *ungodliness, and worldly desires*, and to be *clean from all iniquity*: we are to turn away from all evil; but more especially from the evils hereinamed. The first of which is *ungodliness*; which is usually the first crime we commit, and the source of all the rest. For by *ungodliness* we understand, either the giving away from God what belongs to him, or the refusing him the service and love which we owe him. Now here the sinner usually begins his revolt. He is indispensably obliged to dedicate himself to God from his first coming to the use of reason, instead of which, like the apostate angels, he turns himself away from him, he refuses him his heart, which he so justly claims, and gives it away to empty toys and lying follies. This is *ungodliness*; this is a kind of idolatry, in preferring the creature before the Creator; this is the source of innumerable evils; this is the very bane of the world. O let us renounce it, and detest it.

Consider adly, what those baits are which Satan usually employs to draw us away from God; for no man ever chooses to serve the devil for his own sake, or for any love he has for him: but the tempter sets before us the deceitful appearances of some worldly honour, profit, or pleasure; and with these he allures deluded mortals to his service: these are the gilded pills with which he poisons the soul: these are his treacherous baits which hide the hook, with which he draws millions into hell. Therefore the Christian's rule requires that, together with *ungodliness*, he should also *deny all worldly desires*; that is, all affections to those worldly toys, and cheating vanities; as the most effectual means of disarming Satan, and hindering him from having any hold at all of us. For when we despise all that he can offer, and even fly and abhor his choicest allurements, he stands confounded, and can do no more.

Consider qdly, that these *worldly lusts and desires*, which the Christian must renounce, are, in particular, those of which the beloved disciple writes, 1 John ii. 15. 16. *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the charity of the Father*

that

ther (the love of God) is not in him: for all that is in the world, is the concupiscence of the flesh, and the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life. It is on account of this triple concupiscence, which reigns in all places, that the whole world, as the same Apostle tells us (chap. v. 19.) is seated in wickedness: so that if we desire to belong to Christ in good earnest, and to profess ourselves religious under his rule, we must declare a perpetual war against this triple concupiscence, and its abettors, *viz.* the world, and our corrupt nature: and then we may despise all the devils in hell. Yes, Christians, renounce but these three capital enemies of your souls, *viz.* the love of sensual pleasures, the love of gratifying the covetous eye with worldly toys, and the love of worldly honour and windy pride; and you shall be *clean from all iniquity*.

Conclude to be ever zealous observers of your rule, by *denying ungodliness, and worldly desires:* and turn your hearts to seek your happiness in other kinds of honours, riches and pleasures; which the world cannot give, and which may stay with you for ever.

JAN. 5. *On the lives we are to lead by the Christian's rule.*

CONSIDER first, that by our rule above-rehearsed, we are not only to decline from all evil, in consequence of our God and Saviour's coming amongst us, but we are also to do good: we are not only to *deny ungodliness, and worldly desires;* but also to *live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world:* that we may walk worthy of him, who has given himself for us, not only that he might *redeem us from all iniquity;* but also that he might *cleanse us for himself, and make us an acceptable people, a pursuer of good works.* The Christian's duty, by his rule of life, has three branches: one of them relates to the regulating of himself; another regards his neighbours, but the third, and chiefest of all, relates to his God. All these we comply with, if we *live soberly, and justly, and godly:* because by living *soberly,* we keep ourselves in perfect order: by living *justly,* we behave ourselves to our neighbours in all things, as we ought; and by living *godly,* we dedicate our whole lives to God.

Consider

Consider 2dly, the great extent of these three branches of the Christian's duty; and how much this *sobriety*, this *justice*, and this *godliness* requires of us. Christian *sobriety* does not only exclude intemperance in eating and drinking, but also all other excesses and disorders, that may any ways carry us out of the bounds of strict regularity; so that to be truly sober, we must restrain pride by humility, anger by meekness, lust by purity, and all the irregular motions of our passions and disorderly inclinations, by such a general temperance and moderation, as may maintain the whole man in a due decorum, both as to soul and body. And this Christian *sobriety*, keeps us, as to ourselves, in perfect order, harmony, and peace. Christian *justice* regulates our whole conduct as to our neighbours, by that golden rule of *doing as we would be done by*: and, in consequence of this, excludes every thought, every judgment, or censure, every word or discourse, every action, or dealing, that may any ways tend to his prejudice or disadvantage, and by this means, as much as lies in us, we maintain due order, harmony, and peace with all our neighbours. And lastly, true *godliness* makes us seek God in all things, and above all things; and consecrates all our powers and faculties to his love and service; by the means of recollection, meditation, and continual prayer; and thus we maintain a perpetual peace with God. So that the complying with these three branches of our duty, makes us truly wise, and truly perfect, and establishes the peace of God in our souls.

Consider 3dly, that, according to the words of the Apostle in the place above quoted, whilst we labour to comply with the excellent rule of Christ our Lord by *living soberly, justly, and godly in this world*; we must not confine our views to the narrow limits of this short life here below; but we must be ever *looking forward* towards the great object of the Christian's hope, viz. the blessed and glorious coming of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ, when he shall come to accomplish the great work he has begun in us, and to take us home with him, both in soul and body, to our true country and these

there make us his eternal kingdom. O how happy are those souls that are always aspiring after this coming of their Lord; and bewailing in the mean time the long continuance of their banishment here, and their great distance from him, in this foreign land!

Conclude to begin at least now, with this new year, to enter upon the true paths of life, by a general *sobriety, justice, and godliness*; and to strive to advance daily, by large steps, in this happy way, which leads to that life, which never ends.

JAN. 6. *On the EPIPHANY.*

CONSIDER first, that this day is kept by the church of God, with great solemnity, as one of the principal festivals of the year; and is called the *Epiphany*, that is to say, the *apparition or manifestation* of our Lord: because on this day, he was first made known to the Gentiles, *viz.* to the wisemen of the East; who were conducted to him, by the apparition of an extraordinary star, and inspired to pay their early homage and worship to him. O how just it is that we should all celebrate with a grateful devotion, this day of our first calling to the knowledge and faith of Christ; this Christmas day of the Gentiles! O my soul, how great is this benefit of thy *vocation to the true Christian faith!* what would all other favours, or advantages either of nature, or of grace have availed thee, if this had been wanting? how miserable must thou have been, both for time and eternity, if, like millions of others, thou hadst been left to sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death! O bless him then both now and for ever, who without any desert on thy part, has brought thee to his admirable light!

Consider 2dly, the wonderful ways of divine Providence; as well in preparing beforehand both the Jews and Gentiles, to expect about that time the coming of the great Messiah; as in giving an early notice of his birth both to the Jews and the Gentiles: to the Jews by an Angel sent to the shepherds; to the Gentiles by the star, that appeared to the wisemen of the east. But alas! how few either of the one, or the other, duly corresponded

sponded with this great call! And is not this the case of millions to this day, who though many ways called and invited by, and to, that *light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world*, John i. choose rather to remain in the darkness of infidelity, error, or vice; than to follow the conduct of that star, that would bring them to the true light? O how clearly shall we see one day, that there was nothing wanting on the part of divine Providence to bring us all to himself, but that we have been generally so unhappy, as to be wanting in our correspondence with his lights and calls!

Consider 3dly, that this star, which gave notice of the birth of our Saviour, was seen by all the nations of the East: but that the generality contented themselves with gazing upon it, without taking any pains to seek him, whom that star preached unto them: whilst the wise-men, following this divine call, set out without delay, in quest of this new-born king: in consequence of which, these were happily brought to Christ, and to his admirable light; whilst those others remained in darkness, and died in their infidelity. See my soul the difference between a ready compliance with the inspirations and graces of God, and the neglect of these heavenly calls: a difference, which, as it produces here the distinction of the saint, and the sinner; so will terminate hereafter in a happy eternity, for such as follow God and his calls; and a miserable eternity for such as neglect them. Ah sinners dread the consequences of neglecting the calls of heaven! God will not be mocked.

Conclude to be ever attentive to all those gracious lights and inspirations, by which you are invited to leave the ways of iniquity, and to come and follow Christ. Alas! how many of these stars have you hitherto neglected? Arise now at least, and set out by the guidance of this divine light, that you may make the best of your way home, from those husks of swine to your Father's house. It is not yet too late.

JAN. 7. *On the Wisemen's journey to Bethlehem.*

CONSIDER first, that the wise-men were no sooner informed by the apparition of this extraordinary star,

star, of the birth of the great king that was to rule the world; but they set out to seek him in Judea where they understood, by an ancient tradition, and by the prophesy of Balaam, *Numb. xxiv. 17*, that he that was denoted by that star should be born. And as it was natural for them to expect to hear news of him in Jerusalem, the capital city of Judea; they went thither to enquire after him: *where is he*, say they, *Matt. ii. 2*, *that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to adore him.* But as his kingdom was not of this world; but was to be established, upon other kind of foundations, than any mortal empire, in the immortal souls of his people; and that upon the ruins of worldly pride, and of all the pomps of Satan; he chose for his birth the humble stable of Bethlehem, before any of the stately palaces of Jerusalem; as being more agreeable to his kingdom, the kingdom of humility and truth. O how happy are those souls whose eyes are always open to this heavenly truth, and shut to worldly vanities and lies! how happy they, who by conforming in practice to these maxims of this great king, become themselves his kingdom; even that kingdom in which he shall reign forever!

Consider 2dly, how king Herod was troubled, at hearing of the birth of this new king, and so was all Jerusalem with him: in which they were a figure of all such souls as are so wedded to this cheating world, and its lusts, as to be more afraid of parting with them, than of losing an eternal kingdom: and therefore they are troubled and disturbed, when they are summoned by the messengers of heaven to arise, and leave these toys, to go and seek after Christ; and they even strive to stifle the heavenly infant, that would gladly be born in their souls; by smothering those lights and graces that offer to conduct them to him. O how much more happy were the dispositions of the wise men, who were willing at any rate to find Christ; and who gladly sought and embraced the directions of those who by their office were qualified to point him out to them! But alas! how miserable were those priests and scribes, who whilst they directed

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the wisemen to our Saviour, took no pains to seek him themselves! See my soul, this never be thy case.

Consider 3dly, how the wisemen, in their way from Jerusalem to Bethlehem, were again favoured with the sight of the star; which both conducted them to Bethlehem, and pointed out to them the place where our Saviour was. This heavenly light filled their hearts with exceeding great joy; and going in, they found him whom their souls desired, and they paid their homage to him. O how precious, how lovely, how desirable is that light, that conducts the soul to Christ! O what joy, what delight it is to the soul to see herself draw near to her God, her sovereign good! But then this heavenly manna is not usually given, but to them that fight, and that conquer all the labours, difficulties and oppositions, that they meet with in the way to Christ, and who, like the wisemen, are quite in earnest in seeking him. Happy they that follow this great example! Happy they who taste, and see, how sweet the Lord is to them who seek, and find him!

Conclude to imitate the wisemen, first, in their ready compliance with the divine call; 2dly, in their diligence in inquiring after Christ; and 3dly, in their perseverance, and then you may confidently expect, like them to find your Lord, and to rejoice in him.

JAN. 8. *On the faith and offerings of the wisemen.*

CONSIDER first, the strong and lively faith of the wisemen: they set out with expectation of finding an infant king, attended with that state and pomp, which was suitable with the dignity of one who was born to be monarch of the universe: and behold instead of this they meet with nothing but poverty and humility; a babe wrapt in swadling cloaths, and laid in a manger; attended only with a poor maid, and an humble tradesman; an ox and an ass. But their faith by this time was more fully instructed in the qualities of him, whom they had been seeking for with so much labour: and therefore they were not shocked with those mean appearances; nor looked upon them with a worldly eye; but

but under this poor and humble equipage, believed and adored their king, their God, and their Saviour. O how happy are those souls whose faith takes no scandal either at the crib, or the cross of Christ, but rather knits them so much the more closely to him, by how much the more he has debased himself for the love of them!

Consider 2dly, how the wisemen having found our Lord, immediately fell down prostrate before him, and worshipped him; professing by this humble and submissive posture of the body, the profound reverence and adoration of their souls. Do we imitate them by the like humility, reverence, and adoration when we appear before the same Lord in prayer? After this homage, they opened their stores; and made him their offerings of gold, frankincense, and myrrh; to signify by the quality of these their gifts, their faith in him, to whom they gave them: they presented him with their gold, as a tribute due to him, as their king: they offered him their frankincense, (which was used in the divine worship) as to their God, and they gave him their myrrh, (which was used in the burial of the dead) as to a mortal man, who came to redeem all mankind by his death. O let us, by their example, daily offer him our best homages, in all these qualities, as our King, as our God, and as our Redeemer.

Consider 3dly, that the wisemen having found Christ, were admonished from heaven not to return any more to Herod; and so went back another way to their own country: to teach us, that after finding Christ, we must return no more to his, and our enemies, Satan and sin; but must make the best of our way to our true country, by a quite different road from that by which we came away from it. Our true country is Paradise: we came away from this our country, by pride, by disobedience, by the love of these visible things, and by gratifying our sensual appetite with the forbidden fruit. We must take quite another road, if we hope to return thither again: it must be by penitential tears, by humility, by despising these visible things, by restraining our sensual appetite, by wholesome mortifications of the flesh, and

other self-denials, and by a constant obedience, that we are to find the way back to our true home.

Conclude to quit the broad road, of gratifying thy passions and sensual pleasures; and to pass over to the narrow way of penance and self-denial; and thou shalt be brought safely back to thy true country, and to thy Father's house.

JAN. 9. *Of the offerings we are to make, by the example of the wisemen.*

CONSIDER first, that the *gold, frankincense, and myrrh*, offered by the wisemen to our new-born Saviour, mystically denote other offerings, which we also ought daily to make to him. In the first place, we must offer him the tribute of our *gold*, as to our true King; that is, we must daily present him with our souls, stampt with his own image, and burnished with divine love. This is the *gold*, this is the tribute our Sovereign expects from us. When the Jews asked him concerning their giving tribute to Cæsar, he called for their coin, in which they had the image of Cæsar; and inferred from thence, that they were to render to Cæsar the things that were Cæsar's, (Matt. xxii.) that is, to give him what was stampt with his image. Our souls are stampt with God's own image, to this very end, that we should give them in tribute to him, by perfect love: *render then to God the things that are God's*; by daily offering your whole souls up to him, by fervent acts of love; and you shall have given him your *gold*.

Consider 2dly, that we must also offer our *frankincense* to our Saviour, as to our God. *Incense* in scripture is considered as an emblem of *prayer*; and expresses the worship we pay to our Lord, by sending up to him the odiferous vapours of our devotions, as from the censer of a heart, burning with the love of God. Prayer then is the *frankincense*, which we must, in imitation of the wisemen, present to our Saviour, as to our God. This we must daily offer to him at the *hours of incense*, as a morning and evening sacrifice, in the temple of God, which is within our souls: with this, we ought also

also to endeavour to perfume in some measure all our other daily actions and employments in order to make them agreeable to him.

Consider 3dly, that with these offerings of the gold of divine love, and of the frankincense of fervent prayer, we must also join that of the myrrh of self-denial, and mortification, which our Lord no less expects, and requires at our hands, than the other two: since he has so expressly declared, that except we deny ourselves and hate ourselves in this world, we cannot be his disciples. Myrrh has a bitter taste, but it is a wholesome bitter: and it has an excellent property to keep bodies from corruption. Thus it is an emblem of the mortification of our passions and sensual inclinations; which is somewhat bitter indeed and disagreeable to the taste of our nature; but is sovereignly wholesome, and necessary to keep the soul from the corruption of sin. So that this offering of myrrh, like the other two, should be the daily exercise of a Christian; and should as it were season all his thoughts, words, and deeds, to restrain them from evil.

Conclude, O my soul, not to let a day pass without frequently offering to thy Lord, the gold of love and charity, the frankincense of prayer, and the myrrh of self-denial; and he will certainly accept of both thy offerings and thyself; and in exchange he will give thee himself.

JAN. 10. *On the gospel of the sunday within the Octave of the EPIPHANY.*

CONSIDER, first, how Jesus, Mary, and Joseph went every year up to Jerusalem, to the temple of God, upon the solemn festivals; notwithstanding their poverty, and their living at the distance of three days journey from Jerusalem: and there they employed the weeks appointed for the feasts, in assisting at the public worship, praises, and sacrifices, which were offered to God in the temple at those times. Christians, learn from this great example, the diligence with which you ought to assist at the public worship of God, upon festivals. Learn not to suffer every trifling difficulty to

hinder your attendance in God's temple on those days; when neither the length nor the charges, either of the journey, or of the stay they were to make in Jerusalem, could keep this holy family from a constant observance of these times dedicated to God. But O! who can worthily apprehend the dispositions of soul, with which they entered upon these journeys; their recollection on the road, their heavenly conversation in Jerusalem; their profound adoration, their enflamed love, their fervent prayer and devotion, in the temple! let us strive to imitate them.

Consider 2dly, how when Jesus was twelve years old, and they had gone up, according to their custom, to keep the solemn feast of the Pasch in Jerusalem, after the days of the solemnity were fulfilled, when they returned, our Saviour withdrew himself from them, and staid behind them in the city. They innocently thinking him to be in the company, went one days journey homewards without him, and then not finding him, were struck with unspeakable grief and concern for their loss; the more because they apprehended, lest by some fault of theirs, they might have driven him away from them. Ah! what anguish must it be to a soul, that is sensible of the treasure she possesses, when she has Jesus with her, to find that he has withdrawn himself from her, and that she has lost her treasure. But how much more must this blessed couple have regretted the loss of their Jesus; whose love for him was much greater than can be expressed or imagined? For in proportion to their love, their sorrow also must have been beyond expression great. Learn from hence, my soul, what value thou oughtest to set upon the happiness of having Jesus with thee; and how much thou oughtest to regret the loss of him.

Consider 3dly, that although the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph had lost their Jesus, as to his sensible presence; yet they had not lost him, as to the presence of his grace and love; they had him still very near to them, because they had him in their hearts. A lesson for Christians of good-will, not to be discouraged, nor to give themselves

up

up to excessive anguish, if sometimes they experience the like subtractions of the sensible presence of our Lord, by a dryness in their devotions, and a spiritual desolation; let them but take care to keep their heart and will with him; and they may be assured he is not far from them. He has often dealt thus with the greatest Saints; and to their advantage too: to keep them more humble, and distrustful of themselves; and to teach them not to seek their own satisfaction, in the milk of spiritual consolations, but to be content to feed their souls with the more solid diet of conformity to the will of God, and to the cross of Christ.

Conclude to take care not to drive away Jesus by wilful sin: and be assured that nothing else can ever separate him from thee.

JAN. 11. *On seeking Jesus, when he has been lost by Sin.*

CONSIDER first, how great an evil it is to lose Jesus by wilful sin. Ah! it is a far greater loss than if we should lose the whole world besides; for in losing him we lose our all. This loss is the greatest misery that can befall any soul on this side of eternity: it wants nothing but eternity to make it hell. And yet how common is this loss? How often is Jesus lost in this manner, even in our most solemn festivals, by the abuse of these holy times? And how is it possible that a Christian soul should admit of any manner of comfort, joy, or pleasure, under so great a loss? What then must they do that have reason to apprehend they have thus lost their Jesus: and that he is now no longer theirs; and they no longer his? They must learn from the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph, how they are to seek him, and find him again: for though this blessed couple had not lost him, in that wretched way, yet the manner in which they sought him, may be an instruction to all others to teach them by what means Jesus may be found again when he is lost.

Consider therefore sadly, that the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph were no sooner sensible that they had lost Jesus, but they began to seek him without the least delay; and they gave themselves no rest till they had found

him again: to teach us, that there ought to be no manner of delay in seeking him, as soon as ever we perceive we have lost him; and how much we ought to regret so dismal a loss. They made no stay in the place where they were: but hastened back to Jeruselem, to find him there; not enduring to remain for ever so short a time at a distance from him: to teach us to spare no pains either night or day, in seeking him, and in using all means in our power, to come at him. They sought him *sorrowing*, that is, with their souls full of grief and anguish, through the sense they had of the loss of their *beloved*: to teach us, that the true way to find Jesus when lost, must be by a *sorrow* influenced with love; that is, by a contrite and humble heart. They sought him with perseverance, and did not give over their search, till they had effectually found him: to teach us not to desist, upon meeting with difficulties, and oppositions, in our search after Jesus, but to go on, with diligence, till we recover his gracious company.

Consider 3dly, that Jesus was not found by the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, *amongst their kindred and acquaintance*. Alas! he is too often lost in the company and conversation of our worldly friends; but is very seldom to be found there. The common conversation of the world is at the best but empty, worldly, and distracting; and it is out of fashion to speak, or think, of Jesus in the company of worldlings. Therefore the soul that would effectually find him, must withdraw as much as may be from worldly company, and must enter into a kind of spiritual retreat; she must make the best of her way by spiritual reading, meditation and prayer, to the temple of God in Jerusalem; or rather she must make a temple for her Jesus within her own self, and seek him there by inward recollection. It is the surest place to find him in. O sinners, return to your own hearts, and you will quickly find your God. When you went astray from him, you went astray also from your own hearts, and from your inward house; you forgot at the same time both God and yourselves. Return home to your interior, and you shall recover them both again.

Conclude,

Conclude, if at any time you have reason to apprehend that you have lost Jesus, to withdraw immediately from the crowd, to seek him in his temple in your own interiour; and to give yourselves no rest till you have found him there. There he will hear you; and there he will teach you.

JAN. 12. *On the lessons our Lord Jesus gives us in his private life.*

CONSIDER first, those words spoken by our Lord Jesus to his parents, when they found him in the temple, in the midst of the doctors, hearing them, and asking them questions, *Luke ii.* Did you not know, said he, that I must be about my Father's business? He came down from Heaven, not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him, *John iv. 38.* This was his daily food, during his mortal life. My meat, said he, is to do the will of him that sent me. *John iv. 34.* This then was the exercise of his private life; which he spent in obscurity, and retirement, under a poor carpenter's roof. He was all the while about the business of his Father. He was ever doing the will of his Father. All his thoughts and words, all his actions and omissions, were directed to his Father's glory. And this is the great lesson we are to learn from him in his private life. We all of us, like him, came into this world for nothing else but to do the will of God: we all of us ought to be ever about the business of our heavenly Father: all our thoughts, words, actions, and omissions, ought to be directed to him. O let us study well this great lesson, which the Son of God employed so many years in teaching!

Consider 2dly, how he went down with Joseph and Mary to Nazareth, and was subject to them, *Luke ii. 51.* O stand astonished my soul, to see the Lord and maker of heaven and earth, submitting himself to his creatures, and obedient to them! O see how he serves them even in the meanest offices; how he works, with his reputed father, at his mechanic trade. But with what modesty and silence, with what recollection and application of his soul to his heavenly Father by continual adoration, thanksgiving,

thanksgiving, oblation, and love, and by continual prayer and intercession for us? Christians, learn from this great example, to be ever humble, meek, and obedient. Learn to sanctify your ordinary employments, and even your common actions, by recollection and mental prayer. Learn that even the highest perfection may be found in the exercise of the lowest and meanest offices; if in these the soul do but take care to keep close to her God, and to embrace him by love.

Consider 3dly, what is written of our Lord, with relation to this private part of his life: That *Jesus increased in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men*, Luke ii. 52. Our Lord, who from the first moment of his conception, was full of all heavenly *wisdom* and divine *grace*, was pleased in proportion to his advancing in age, to shew forth every day more than other, in his words and actions, the admirable treasures of wisdom and grace that were hidden in his soul: to teach us to make a continual progress in the way of God; and to advance every day by large steps, from virtue to virtue, till we come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ, Eph. iv. 13. Christians, do we seriously apply ourselves to learn this excellent lesson? What progress have we hitherto made, after so many years pretending to walk after Jesus Christ in the way of virtue? Have we not for the most part rather gone backward than forward? O let us now at least begin to be in earnest!

Conclude to learn of our Saviour all those lessons which he desires to teach us in his private life: particularly these three, 1. To be ever about the busines of our Father. 2. To be ever submissive and obedient to his vice-gerents, and 3, To be ever making the best of our way to him.

JAN. 13. *On our Saviour's being baptised by St. John the Baptist.*

CONSIDER first, how St. John the Baptist, being sent as a fore-runner of our Lord, to prepare the people for him, by preaching to them penance, and a thorough

thorough conversion from their sins; when a multitude of publicans and other sinners resorted to him, and were baptised by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins, and receiving from him the rules of a new life: Our Lord Jesus also came among them, as if he had been one of their number, and stood in need of that baptism of penance for the remission of sins; and desired to be baptised by him. Admire the humility of this *Lamb of God*, who came to take away the sins of the world; and yet here associates himself with sinners, and is willing to pass for one of them. The Baptist was astonished at it, and refused to baptise him, saying; *I ought to be baptised by thee, and comest thou to me?* But Jesus insisted upon his doing it: *for so it becometh us*, said he, *to fulfill all justice*, (Matt. iii. 14, 15.) that is, to exercise, and to give examples of all virtues; amongst which *humility* is the foundation, which sustains all the rest. O give us thy grace, dear Lord, that we also may fulfil all justice, by the imitation of thy humility.

Consider adly, how our Lord Jesus, having thus humbled himself, to fulfil all justice, was presently exalted by his heavenly Father; when being baptised and praying, heaven was opened: and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape, as a dove, upon him, and a voice came from heaven: *Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased*, Luke iii. 21, 22. Learn from hence, my soul, that humility opens heaven, and conducts us to God, and to all good. But see, also, how upon this occasion of the baptism of Christ, the chief mysteries of religion are displayed: see how the Blessed Trinity manifests itself; the Father by his voice from heaven; the Son in his human nature, assumed for us; and the Holy Ghost by descending in the shape of a dove. See how the mission, and the whole Gospel of Jesus Christ, is here solemnly authorized, with a formal declaration of the dignity of his person, and of his unction and consecration by the Spirit of God: see how the Son of God, descending into the waters, sanctifies them, in order to those great effects of regeneration and renovation of the soul, in the laver of baptism: see how he buries, as it were, the old

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Adam here, under the waters, and brings him forth a new man; opening heaven in his favour, and imparting to him both his holy Spirit, and the title and dignity of Son of God. O let us venerate these heavenly mysteries! let us here embrace our humble Saviour, the source of all our good.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord began the functions of his mission, and the preaching of his Gospel, from this time of his being baptized; and his being here solemnly recommended to the world; not only by the repeated testimonies of St. John Baptist, but by the voice of his heavenly Father, and by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost. But first, for our instruction, he was pleased, by way of preparation, to withdraw himself from the conversation of men, into a lonesome wilderness, and there to employ forty days in fasting and prayer; at the end of which time he suffered three different assaults of temptation from Satan; and after overcoming this wicked enemy, was visited and served by Angels. Christians, let us learn from this great example, in all our spiritual undertakings, to seek first the assistance and blessing of heaven, by retirement, fasting, and prayer: let us learn, that these same are also the best arms against all the temptations of the enemy: that we are not to expect, how much soever we are retired from the world, to live without temptations; since Christ himself was tempted, and tempted in the desert: but that we must, by his example, fight and overcome; and that this is the way to heavenly comforts here, and to an immortal crown hereafter.

Conclude to keep as close as thou canst to the Lord Jesus, in every step he takes; and to have thy eyes always upon him; that thou mayest copy out his virtues in thy life.

JAN. 14. *On the sacred name of Jesus.*
For the first Sunday after the Octave of the EPIPHANY.

CONSIDER first, these words of the Apostle, Philip. ii. spoken of the eternal Son of God, incarnate for us: *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath*

hath exalted him, and hath given him a name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father. Christians, let us then venerate this sacred name, and all the mysteries and heavenly truths it contains; which are so many, and so great, that no tongue can sufficiently express them, nor heart conceive them. The name of Jesus came from heaven: it signifies a *Saviour*; but such a *Saviour*, as should deliver his people from their sins; reconcile lost man to God; purchase for him mercy, grace, and salvation, and of a slave of Satan, and a child of hell, make him a Son of God, and heir of heaven. O what has not our Lord Jesus done, what has he not suffered that he might be such a Jesus to us! none but he could ever fulfil the import of this heavenly name: none but a *God-man*, an *Emmanuel*, that is, a *God with us*, could be a Jesus to save his people from their sins, and be to them a never-failing source of all true good; even to that degree as to make them in a manner partners in his divinity.

Consider 2dly, that the name of Jesus is a name of virtue and of power: in this name the churches of God were planted throughout the earth. In this name the Apostles wrought all kind of miracles, and even raised the dead to life. By this name millions of martyrs have overcome death in all its shapes. This name has peopled the desarts with holy solitaries; and every nation of the christian world, in every age, with innumerable saints, who looking upon Jesus the author and finisher of their faith, have, through his name, overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, and are now set down with Jesus in his throne, according to the promise he has made to them that conquer in his name, *Rev. iii. 21.* To this sacred name so many mighty monarchs have yielded themselves captives; submitting both themselves and their kingdoms to this great conqueror; and oftentimes leaving even their crown and sceptre for the love of this divine name. O kingdom of Jesus, kingdom of mercy
and

and grace, when wilt thou extend thy conquests over all the universe; and bring all kings and people, all nations and all hearts, to bow down, to embrace, and to give all praise and glory to this adorable name?

Consider 3dly, that the name of *Jesus* carries with it an unspeakable majesty, tempered with humility, meekness, sweetness, and love; inasmuch as it expresses us *a God made man*, even a poor, meek and humble man, out of a pure love for us. It shews forth to us all the divine attributes, stooping, as I may say, to the work of our redemption, in order to raise us up from the dunghill, and to bring us to a heavenly kingdom. *Jesus* is a name of mercy, a name of comfort, a name of grace and salvation: it promises pardon and forgiveness to all penitent sinners; it preaches to them deliverance from their slavery, and from their bonds; the discharge of all their debts; the healing of their maladies, and from the wrath to come. It supports the Christian pilgrim under all his labours; it comforts him in all his afflictions; it is his refuge in all dangers; it sets before him the source of all his good; it encourages him to pray with an assurance that there is nothing but what he may obtain, if he prays in the name of his Saviour. It puts to flight all the powers of hell; they cannot bear that sacred name. It conquers the world and the flesh; in fine, it opens heaven to all its true lovers and followers. O sacred name, mayest thou be always in our hearts, and in our mouths! It was so with the blessed Apostle St. Paul: O may we, like him, find all things in *Jesus*!

Conclude ever to venerate the divine name of *Jesus*, as presenting to your souls the principal object of the Christian's *faith*; the strongest grounds of his *hope*; and the chiefest motive, and most powerful attractive, to engage his *love*: viz. a God incarnate, and crucified for us. Thus may you exercise, as often as you hear this sacred name, all the three theological virtues, of faith, hope, and love of God.

JAN. 15. *On our Lord's changing water into wine, at the marriage-feast of Cana, St. John ii.*

CONSIDER first, those words of the Gospel. *There was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples.* Happy marriage which our Lord was pleased to honour with his presence, and with his first miracle! he himself was the author and first institutor of marriage: and therefore was pleased to give it a sanction, and a blessing, by assisting at it. He came to marry, as it were, by his incarnation, our human nature with his divine person: he came to marry himself to his church, and by imparting to it a spiritual grace, to raise Christian matrimony to the dignity of a sacrament; which should be a sacred and mysterious sign of this perpetual union with his church: he came to espouse our souls to himself; and therefore was pleased to favour this marriage (in which the contracting parties were in all appearance, allied both in blood and virtue, with his blessed mother) with his first miracle. O how happy were they in inviting Jesus and Mary to their wedding! O how unhappy are they who when they marry, *shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, to give themselves to their lust*, Tob. vi. 17. Over these the devil hath power: because they invite him, rather than Jesus, to their wedding. And is not this the true cause why so many marriages are unhappy for want of the blessing of Jesus?

Consider 2dly, how, in the midst of the marriage-feast, wine was wanting, to teach us, how deceitful are all the pleasures of the world, and how often they fail us, when we expect the most from them. O it is Jesus alone can furnish our immortal souls, with the true wine that cheereth the heart of man. It is his love alone can present us with pure delights, which bring with them joy and peace, and a certain fore-taste of heaven. He often changes, in favour of his friends, even the waters of the torrent in the way, into delicious wine, by the consolations he gives them in their labours and afflictions, and the spiritual blessings of his grace, for the advancing their souls in

divine love, and bringing them nearer to himself, the source of all sweetness: whilst the world, the flesh, and the devil, do but delude us, by flattering our senses at first with a false sweetness, which quickly comes to an end; and leaves nothing behind it but bitterness, discontent, and remorse.

Consider 3dly, that this miraculous change, made by our Lord, of water into wine, (which was his first miracle) was a prelude to another more miraculous change, which he made at his last supper, and will continue to make, by his ministers, even to the end of the world, of bread and wine into his own body and blood. With this wonderful miracle, he daily honours the wedding-feast of his own espousals with our souls, in order to communicate himself to his spouses, and to unite them to himself. And by the means of this communication of himself to us, he operates another no less wonderful change in us, by which he changes us in a manner into himself. The corporeal food we take is by the means of our natural heat daily changed into our flesh and blood; but this spiritual food like the fire, which changes all things into itself, is not changed into our substance, but changes and transforms our souls, as it were, into its own nature, to make them one with this bread of life; here by grace, hereafter by glory. O miraculous change! O blessed conversion!

Conclude to be ever thankful for all the wonders, which the Son of God has wrought, and continues daily to work for thee. But particularly join with the church at this time of the Epiphany, in celebrating with love and gratitude, those three miracles, which were the forerunners of, and introductions to all thy good, thy *vocation* to the true faith, thy being regenerated in Christ, by *baptism*; and admitted to his heavenly feast in the blessed Eucharist, in which thou art incorporated with him. O who can ever sufficiently love him, and praise him, for these great wonders of his love to us!

JAN. 16. *On the necessity of consideration.*

CONSIDER ~~well~~, and take a view of the whole Christian world, and see how much Satan and sin every where reign. See how many thousands in every nation, of all degrees and conditions, pass their lives in mortal sin, with little or no concern, or apprehensions, either of death, judgment, or hell: see how they wallow in the mire of carnal pleasures: see how they indulge their passions, and prefer ever empty toy, meer bubbles, before their immortal souls; before their God, and a happy eternity: see how numbers of them, even live without God, and in a total forgetfulness of him: then see how hell opens wide its jaws, and daily swallows down thousands of them; cut off alas in the midst of their sins, when they least expected it, and hurried away in a moment from their short-lived, empty, and deceitful satisfactions, to dreadful, and everlasting torments. And whence proceeds all this dismal scene of evils, but from the want of consideration? *with desolation is all the earth made desolate*, saith the prophet, *because there is none that considereth in the heart*, Jerem. xii. 11.

Consider 2dly, the great truths which the Christian faith teaches. That there is a God of infinite majesty, whose eye is always upon us: A God infinitely good, and infinitely just; and who hates wilful sin with an infinite hatred. A God, who is our first beginning, and our last end, our creator and redeemer to whom we belong by all kind of titles: who made us for himself; and sent us hither upon no other errand, and for no other business, but to love and serve him in this world, and to be eternally happy with him in the next: that there is another life hereafter, in comparison with which the present is but a moment: that death will quickly separate us from all these visible things, and send us into another region, where all that worldlings here set their hearts on, will appear as smoak: that there is a judgment to come: and that there is a heaven, and a hell, &c. All these are articles of the Christian faith: and all most certainly true; and in themselves very

moving. And do all Christians believe these truths? They must believe them, or they are no Christians. But how then is it possible they should ~~live~~ as the generality do? How is it possible that such as believe all these things should live on in sin, and walk in the broad road that leads to hell? O! it is for want of consideration. It is because they do not think.

Consider 3dly, that the great difference between the good and bad Christian, is that the one thinks well on the truths he believes, and by that means lets them sink deep into his soul, and take root there, so that they bring forth in him the fruits of all virtues: whereas the other does not think; and therefore is little or nothing affected with the truths of the gospel: they make no impression upon him; because his faith is asleep, or rather dead, for want of consideration. O what wonderful effects have we not seen produced in the world by consideration? How many, even of the greatest sinners, have been reclaimed by it; and drawn back from the very jaws of hell? How many has it sent out of the midst of Babylon to seek their God in solitude; and to consecrate their lives to him. O; that men would but think, what a reformation should we see in the world! O it is thinking is the true way to heaven; and not thinking the high road to hell!

Conclude to allow thyself daily some time to meditate upon some or other of the great truths, that relate to God and eternity. It is one of the best means thou hast to secure thy soul. They who will not think of these things now, will infallibly think on them hereafter, when their thinking will only serve to increase their eternal misery.

JAN 17. *On the consideration of God.*

CONSIDER first, that we cannot be saved without *the knowledge of God*, and such a knowledge, as may effectually influence our lives, and command both our love and obedience. Now we can neither know God, nor love him as we ought, without the help of consideration. It is consideration that discovers to us his infinite

nite beauty and perfection; and the many pressing motives we have to dedicate ourselves wholly to his love and service. It is consideration sets before our eyes his eternal love, and all his benefits to us, and convinces us that he is both infinitely charming and lovely in himself, and infinitely good to us. Without consideration, we know these things, as if we knew them not: we have eyes and see not. But when these truths are duly weighed and considered by the soul; it is then the light of the knowledge of God, begins to dispel our darkness; and in our meditation the fire of his love breaks forth into flames, which sweetly carry up the soul towards their heavenly element, which is with God; and hinder her from ever forgetting him.

Consider 2dly, how large a field we have in God for our meditation, whether we consider him as he is in himself, and in his own divine attributes; or with relation to what he is to us, and the titles he has been pleased to assume in our regard. He is in himself *eternal*, that is, without beginning, without end, without change, self-existent, independent: he is being itself, he alone properly is: *I am who am*, says he, *Exod. iii.* all other things are just nothing at all; they have no being but from him, and in him: he is the being of all beings. He is *immense* and *incomprehensible*, and every way *infinite*: he fills heaven and earth: creating, preserving, moving, ruling, supporting all things. He is infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely good, infinitely just, infinitely merciful; he is beauty itself, truth itself, and all perfection. See my soul what an immense field we have here for our considerations! It has no end. Here is more than enough to employ us for all eternity; in this vast ocean of the infinite perfections of the Deity, the blessed themselves can find no bottom. Here they are happily lost in the contemplation of him, who though he discovers himself to them face to face, and fills their souls with heavenly pleasure, remains nevertheless *incomprehensible*, even to the highest angels, because he is every way *infinite*.

Consider 3dly, that there still remains an ample field for meditation to help us to acquire the knowledge and love of God, in the manifold considerations of what God is in our regard, and how good he is to us. He is our sovereign good: he alone can satisfy our souls. He has loved us first: He is our ancient lover; He is our eternal lover; his thought and heart is always upon us. He is a disinterested lover: a most faithful, and most constant lover, whose love never forsakes them, that do not first forsake his love. He is our maker, and our redeemer; the best of Fathers; the best of friends, the spouse of our souls. He ever desires to come and dwell with us, and in us; and to impart all his heavenly treasures to us; in a word to give himself to us, and to take us to himself. And are not here sufficient motives to oblige us to love this great and good God; infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us? Is it possible, that a generous heart, made through love and for love, should hold out against such pressing considerations as these, so far as to refuse a return of love? O divine love, it is only because thou art thought of so little, that thou art so little known in this wretched world; and it is only because thou art so little known, that thou art so little loved. O it is consideration then is both the true way to know thee, and the true way to love thee!

Conclude ever to seek by daily considerations, and to cherish in thy soul, this saving and savoury knowledge of God; as the source of divine love and of all thy good. And remember that a deluge of all evils, will come pouring in upon the soul, where this knowledge of God is wanting. *Offer iv. 1, 2.*

JAN. 18. *On the consideration of the law of God.*

CONSIDER first, that, in order to our salvation, we must also have a right knowledge of the holy law and commandments of God: we must know all the precepts and maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: and we must know them in such a manner as to be practically convinced of the beauty of this divine law, of the equity

equity of these commandments; of the excellence of these heavenly precepts, of the truth of these Gospel maxims; that so we may heartily embrace them, love them, and keep them. Now this infers a necessity of a serious and frequent meditation on God's holy law; without which we shall not even know as we ought the duties and obligations of a Christian life; much less shall we have a due esteem and love for these divine statutes and ordinances, which our great King has made to be for us the way to true life. *O! Blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord: and who shall meditate on it day and night. And he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season; and his leaf shall not fall off: and all whatsoever he shall do shall prosper.* Ps. 1. O happy meditation, which is the source of so much good! unhappy they who seldom think of this divine law, and therefore neither love it, nor keep it.

Consider 2dly, that, even under the old testament, God required of his people, that they should continually meditate on his divine commandments, *Deuter. vi. 6, &c. These words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart: and thou shalt tell them to thy children, and thou shalt meditate upon them, sitting in thy house, and walking on thy journey, lying down to bed, and rising up. And thou shalt bind them as a sign on thy hand, and they shall be, and shall move, between thy eyes. And thou shalt write them in the entry, and on the doors of thy house.* Now if under the old law, (when so great perfection was not expected of the faithful as now) God was pleased to require this close application of the soul to the meditating on his divine precepts; how much more does he now expect it from us, under the new covenant of grace and love, in which he delivers his commandments to us, not graven on tables of stone, but on the tables of the heart; not to be laid up in the ark, or deposited in an earthly sanctuary, but to be laid up within us, in the true sanctuary of God in our souls? Christians, this is our glory, and our wisdom, this is our happiness above all other people, to have the divine law written in our hearts: to keep

keep it there by love and affection, and to read it there by attention and meditation, lest otherwise we lose so great a treasure.

Consider godly, what were the sentiments of the royal prophet, with regard to the law and commandments of God, and the duty of meditating continually upon them. He has abundantly declared them in the 118th psalm, (*alias* 119th) where there is scarce one verse, in which the beauty and excellency of the divine law, the love and observance of it, the great happiness of keeping it, and the many advantages of meditating upon it, are not strongly inculcated. For which reason the church, in her canonical hours of prayer, appoints this psalm for the daily devotion of her children, in order to inspire into them the like sentiments, with relation to the holy law and commandments of God, and to oblige them daily to meditate upon these divine ordinances. Christians, can any thing else be of so great importance to you, as to study well the true way to a happy eternity? Can any other science deserve your attention in comparison with this? Is not your all here at stake? And what other way is there to secure to your souls a happy eternity, but the knowing and keeping the law and commandments of God? It is this then calls for your study and attention by daily considerations and meditations.

Conclude to turn henceforwards your thoughts from vain and curious searches into things little or nothing to your purpose; to the daily considering on what God requires of you by his holy law, what your duty is to him; and what his will is in your regard. The studying this is our great business. O how little will all other sciences avail, if this be neglected.

JAN. 19. *On the consideration of ourselves.*

CONSIDER first, that, besides the obligation we lie under of daily consideration, in order to know God, and our duty to him, there is another branch of necessary knowledge, which also calls for our serious attention and meditation: and this is the knowledge of ourselves.

selves. ‘ This is the highest and most profitable lesson,’ says the devout *A Kempis*, ‘ truly to know, and to despise ourselves.’ The knowledge of ourselves is the foundation of true humility, which is the virtue that teaches us to despise ourselves: and humility is the foundation of all other virtues; they have all a necessary dependance upon it. So that the knowledge of ourselves is, in effect, the foundation of all virtues. Now this knowledge of ourselves is not to be acquired without frequent and serious consideration. For to know ourselves right we must consider attentively our origin and extraction; what we have hitherto been; what we are now at present; and what we shall be by and by: and such considerations as these will open our eyes, and will convince us, what poor wretches we are; and how little reason we have to be proud; and, on the contrary, how many urgent reasons we have to despise ourselves, and to be thoroughly humble.

Consider therefore sedly, your extraction, as to your body, out of dirt and corruption, as to your soul, out of nothing; and that whatsoever you have, either as to body or soul, above mere nothing, is not of your own growth, but the property of your maker. Reflect that you no sooner came into a being, but you were defiled with sin; and were children of wrath. That your whole life has hitherto been one continued course of sin and ingratitude. And ah! how often have you fallen into that worst of evils, that bottomless pit, of *mortal sin*? And what a dreadful figure did you then make in the sight of God, and his holy Angels? What confusion, what horror, what an eternal damnation was then your due? And is not this still your case at this day? And what title have you then to any regard, either from God or man? What claim to any benefit, or service from any of God’s creatures? Or what just complaint can you make, if all the world should abhor you, as a traitor to God, a slave to the devil, and a victim of hell; and all creatures should join together against you, to revenge upon you the cause of their creator? Reflect also on the many miseries you daily lie under, the small light

light there is in you, for the discerning true good from that which is only so in appearance; the strength of your passions, and self-love; your perpetual repugnance to the taking true pains for acquiring real goods, and the violent bent of your inclinations to evil. And then consider how soon death will be with you, and send your bodies to the worms, and your souls to the bar of divine justice, under a dreadful uncertainty as to your eternal lot. And see if, in the consideration of these things, you will not find matter enough to cure your pride, and to bring you to a true sense of your manifold misery and corruption; that so you may learn entirely to distrust in yourselves; to be ever humble; and to place your whole confidence in God.

Consider 3dly, the other great advantages which the soul acquires by often entering into herself, by the means of serious consideration; and taking an impartial view of the whole state of her own interiour. Here she discovers her spiritual maladies, (to which before she was a stranger) and she is enabled by this discovery, to seek and to apply proper remedies to all her evils. Here she finds out the secret ambushes of her enemies, especially those more subtle ones of her pride and self-love, which are continually seeking to impose upon her, and deceive her. Here she learns to discern between the different motions of nature and grace, to watch over her own heart, to regulate its affections and inclinations; to guard against her passions, and to order her whole interiour in such manner as to be agreeable to him who desires to make it his everlasting temple. O how happy it is for the soul thus to know herself! Ah, what will it avail a man to know all things else, if he be a stranger to himself!

Conclude to make the knowledge of thyself one of thy principal studies for the future. The Saints have always considered the knowledge of God, and the knowledge of themselves, as the most necessary of all sciences. O study well, by the means of daily meditation, this science of the Saints in both its parts. Daily pray with St. Augustin, *noverim te, noverim me. Lord, give*

give me grace to know thee: Lord, give me grace to know myself.

JAN. 20. *On our first beginning.*

CONSIDER first, my soul, that not very long ago thou hadst no being at all; nor any share in the transactions of the world: thou wast not even so much as thought of by any creature upon earth. In this low abyss of nothing thou hadst been ingulfed from all eternity: and there of thyself thou must have remained to all eternity, infinitely beneath the condition even of the meanest insect, or the most inconsiderable of all God's creatures: so that whatsoever thou hast at present above this mere nothing, is no acquisition of thy own, nor any property of thine, but the pure gift of thy Maker. Down then with all self-conceit and presumption: down with all vain-glory: acknowledge thy true origin, thy original nothing: sit always down in the lowest place, even in the centre of thy nothing: ascribe nothing to thyself, as of thy own growth, but thy manifold sins: give the whole glory of all the rest to thy Maker.

Consider 2dly, who it was that drew thee out of that deep abyss of nothing, into this being, which thou now enjoyest: who gave thee this power of thinking, this conscious life, this will, this memory, this understanding; who made for thee this soul and body? No other but he that made heaven and earth; even the eternal, immense infinite Deity. And how came this great God to think of making thee? What did he see in thee, that could move him to love thee; and to bestow this being upon thee? O it was nothing but his own infinite goodness: for there could be nothing in thee worthy of his love: he stood in no need of thee: thou couldst do him no service. O! embrace then, with all the powers of thy soul, this infinite goodness of thy God. Give thy whole being to him, who has given it all to thee. Dedicate thy whole self to his love and service, for time and eternity.

Consider 3dly, that God made thee after his own image and likeness, that he might engage thee the more to

to love him. This image and likeness is in thy soul, which is a spiritual being; and in the spiritual powers of thy soul, thy free will, which nothing controuls, and which can be satisfied with nothing less than God; and thy understanding, which is capable of soaring above all things, visible and invisible; and reaching to the contemplation of God himself. O let not then this noble spirit lie any longer groveling in the mire of the earth! Let not this will, that was made to be a queen, be a slave to flesh and blood. Let not this understanding, this mind, this thought, that should contemplate heavenly truths, be bowed down to empty earthly toys.

Conclude to be ever mindful, of thy own nothing: and that thou hast received all thou hast from the pure bounty of God. The sense and remembrance of this truth will teach thee, always to despise thyself, and to love thy Maker with all thy strength.

JAN. 21. *On our last end.*

CONSIDER first, my soul, why thou camest hither? what is thy busines in this mortal life? for what end has God made thee? upon what errand has he sent thee hither? This should have been the subject of thy meditation from thy first coming to the use of reason; and hast thou ever yet seriously thought on it? Thou canst not here plead ignorance: for one of the first things thou wast taught; was, that thou wast made for God; and that the busines for which thou camest into the world, was to know him, love him, and serve him here, and so to come to enjoy him hereafter, in a happy eternity. O how noble, how glorious, how blessed is this end, for which thou wast made! O how good is thy God, who has made thee for himself, and for heaven; and even from all eternity, has designed this happiness for thee.

Consider 2dly, that properly speaking, thou hast but one thing to do in this mortal life; and that is no other than to answer this end, for which thou wast made, by dedicating thyself, in good earnest, to the love and service of thy Maker. This is that *one thing necessary,*

Luke

Luke x. 42. If thou apply thyself seriously to this great business, all is well: if thou neglect this, all will be lost, whatever success thou mayest meet with in any thing else. *O what will it avail a man, to gain the whole world, if he lose his own soul,* and with his soul, lose his God, and a happy eternity? O let all other busines then be subordinate to this: let all that no ways conduces to this, be despised as vain and unprofitable: let all that is opposite to this be avoided, rejected and abhorred, as hurtful and pernicious. O how true is it, *vanity of vanities, and all is vanity,* besides the loving God, and serving him alone. *Kempis.*

Consider 3dly, the great blindness and misery of worldlings who live in a continual neglect, and forgetfulness of this their only busines: whose pursuits are after mere vanities; who weary themselves, like children, in running after butterflies; in catching at bubbles, and empty shadows; such as vain honours, false riches, and deceitful pleasures, that last but one moment; and for these they forfeit God and eternity. And has not this, O my soul, been hitherto thy own case? O be confounded at the thought of thy having been so strangely senseless, and so very wretched. Detest the errors of thy past life: and now at least resolve to mind thy true and only busines, and to turn to thy God with all thy heart.

Conclude, since God is both thy first beginning, and thy last end; since thou art made by him, and for him, and all thy powers, senses and faculties are designed to bring thee to him; to employ them all henceforward in serving and glorifying him: thus only shalt thou find true comfort here, and heaven hereafter.

JAN. 22. *On the titles God has to our service.*

CONSIDER first, that we belong to God, by all manner of titles; and therefore cannot without the most crying injustice alienate any part of our being from him, or refuse to employ our whole selves in his divine service, we are his by *creation;* because he made us; and made us for himself; and therefore has given

us a Soul, capable of knowing, loving and enjoying him; and not able to find any true rest or satisfaction but in him. Our whole being is from him: our whole soul and body, with all our powers, senses and faculties belong to him: all whatsoever we possess, interiourly, or exteriourly, is all his. And as the fund is his, so the whole produce ought to be his. As we are absolutely and entirely his property; and all our time, and all our talents, are but lent us by him: so are we indispensibly obliged to dedicate all our hours, all our thoughts, words and actions to him. And have we ever rightly considered this obligation? We belong to God in like manner, by the title of *conservation*, by which he preserves and maintains every moment the being he has given us: otherwise we should presently return again to our ancient nothing. So that as in every moment we have an obligation to him for our continuance in being what we are: so every moment we are obliged to be his.

Consider 2dly, that we belong also to God, and that in a very particular manner, by our *redemption*; by which the Son of God has purchased us for himself and for his Father with his own most precious blood. For we had sold ourselves to Satan: we were become his slaves: we had no longer any share in God, or title to him; we were rebels and traitors to him by sin; and as such we stood condemned to death and to hell. But behold, the Son of God, out of pure love and compassion, comes down from heaven, to redeem us; he pays himself the price of our ransom, a great price indeed; even the last drop of his own most sacred blood; to deliver us from Satan, sin and hell; to reconcile us to his Father, and to purchase mercy, grace and salvation for us. So that now by virtue of this redemption he claims us as his own property: and it would be a sacrilegious robbery to pretend to alienate again from him these souls of ours, which he has purchased for himself with his own blood: It would be even in the language of the apostle, *treading under foot the Son of God, and esteeming the blood of the covenant unclean, with which we were sanctified*, Heb. x. 29.

Consider

Consider 3dly, that we belong also to God, by solemn vows and covenants, and by the *dedication*, by which we were happily and holily, dedicated and consecrated to him in our baptism, and confirmation; and sanctified to be his temples for ever. Now all those things, that are once solemnly consecrated to God; and more especially such as are made the temples of the living God, must be always his: and it would be a most grievous sacrilege to pervert them from his service to profane uses; and therefore it would be highly criminal in us to pervert these souls of ours from the love and service of their God, to whom they have been thus solemnly dedicated; and to profane and defile them, by wilful sin. We belong to him also in quality of our king, our father, our Lord and master, the great sovereign of the whole universe, the being of all beings, &c. and upon all these, and many more titles, his divine Majesty challenges our love and service, as his undoubted right; O let us never be so miserable as to refuse him, what he so justly claims. Let us look upon it as our greatest happiness that we belong entirely to him.

Conclude to render faithfully to God, what upon so many titles belongs to him, by giving your whole selves to him, and employing henceforward both your soul and body, in executing all his wills.

JAN. 23. *On the happiness of serving God.*

CONSIDER first, those words of the prophet (Isai. iii.) *Say to the just man: it is well.* And reflect on the many advantages, which this short word *well* comprises and ensures to the just, both for time and eternity. Honour, riches and pleasures are the things on which the world sets the greatest value: but they are not to be found where the world seeks them; but only in the service of God. It is indeed a greater honour to be a *servant* of God, than to be the emperor of all the earth. What then must it be to be his friend and favourite; to be his spouse, to be his child, to be his temple? can any worldly honours be compared with these? O how glorious a dignity it is to be heir apparent to a heavenly and

eternal kingdom? O how happy, in the mean time, during our mortal pilgrimage, to walk and converse with God; to be as familiar as one pleases with this great king; to have admittance into his closet whenever we will; to have an assurance from him of a favourable audience, and of obtaining all our requests, &c? How truly honourable is it to have one's name enrolled in the book of life; one's character established, not in the mean village of this world (which nevertheless cannot help admiring and esteeming true virtue) but in the great city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem? O my soul, let such honours as these be the only objects of thy ambition.

Consider 2dly, how rich the just man is: not always indeed in those worldly possessions, which every accident may take away; and which can never satisfy the heart: But in treasures infinitely more valuable of virtue, grace, and merit, which all the money in the world is not sufficient to purchase; and which make the soul rich of eternity. But the servants of God have still a greater treasure than this, viz. God himself; whom the whole world cannot take from them, as long as they take care not to drive him away, by wilful sin. *He is their protector, and their reward exceeding great.* Gen. xv. He is always with them: he is a tender father to them; the eye of his special providence is ever upon them; his Angels encamp about them, to defend them, and deliver them from evil. In a word, God is all things to them that fear and love him; so that even as to the goods of the world, he never forsakes those that do not first forsake him. O my soul, see thou seek no other treasure but him: He will make thee rich indeed: fear no loss but the losing him: If thou hast him, nothing can make thee miserable: but without him nothing can make thee happy.

Consider 3dly, the solid *pleasures* that attend a virtuous life: such as the satisfaction, peace and joy of a good conscience; the sense that holy souls have of God's goodness, and love for them; the experience they have of his sweetness, in their recollection and prayer; the consolations

consolations of the Holy Ghost, and the ravishing delights they often find in God, as a certain foretaste of the joys of heaven; the comfortable prospect of a happy eternity, after their short mortal pilgrimage; and above all their love of God, and a blessed conformity to his will in all things, which sweetens even their greatest crosses. Such pleasures as these are far beyond all that worldlings can pretend to: pleasures pure and spiritual, which have supported, and even given an inexpressible joy, to the martyrs, under the worst of their torments: which have sweetened all the labours and penitential austeries for other saints; and made them think whole nights too short, when spent with God in prayer. O! how great then is that error, how pernicious is that deceit, by which Satan persuades the children of this world, that there are no pleasures in a virtuous life; whereas indeed there is no true pleasure any where else.

Conclude, since thy whole happiness, in time, as well as eternity, depends entirely upon loving and serving God; to set out from this hour in quest of this happiness, by entering upon the beautiful path of virtue, which alone can bring thee to it.

JAN. 24. *On the vanity of all those things, that keep worldlings from the service of God.*

CONSIDER first, how truly vain all those things are which poor deluded worldlings prefer before their God: empty bubbles, mere toys and trifles, false appearances, deceitful baits, laid by the enemy to catch their souls; gilded pills, that conceal a deadly poison; deluding dreams; and airy phantoms, that will all vanish away in a moment, and leave both their hands, and their hearts empty: and then alas the scene will change; and their fool's paradise of an imaginary happiness, shall turn to real, dreadful and everlasting evils. *O ye children of men, how long will you be in love with vanity? how long will you run after mere lies, and deceit?* Reflect upon those that are gone before you; upon those that have enjoyed the most of what this world could afford of honours, riches, and pleasures: and tell me what judgment

you think they make of them now. O they will certainly cry out with Solomon (*Eccles.* ii. 11.) that in *all these things* they *found* nothing but *vanity and vexation of spirit*. They will loudly condemn their own past folly and madness, in having set their hearts upon such toys, to the loss of God and their souls.

Consider 2dly, and take a nearer view of these worldly idols, these phantoms of honours, riches and pleasures; and see with what toil they are acquired, with what cares and fears they are possessed; how easily they are lost; how great evils they are exposed to; what a slavery they bring along with them; how short, and how inconstant they are; how false and deceitful; how often embittered with gall; how mean, and unworthy the affections of a Christian; how far beneath the dignity of an immortal soul, made for nothing less than God; and how incapable of giving any solid content or satisfaction to a heart that can never rest but in its maker. O how truly miserable then are all these children of Babylon, who are enslaved to things so base, so vile, so filthy! How wretched is that life that is all spent in this manner, in weaving cobwebs, in running after butterflies, in catching at shadows! in squandering away those precious hours, that were given to secure to the soul a happy eternity, in impudent amusement, in idle, foolish and often sinful conversation; in dressing out, or pampering a carcase that must quickly be the food of worms, in publick houses, in hanging over a pack of cards, in reading love-tales and romances, and such like empty fooleries. Surely such a life as this must be most irksome and tedious, void of all true content, joy, peace, or comfort here, and of all prospect of happiness hereafter.

Consider 3dly, how this folly and misery of worldlings is described by the prophet *Isaias* chap. lix, where he tells them that they put their trust in that which is a mere *nothing*; that they *speak vanities*; that is, that their whole discourse and conversation is empty, foolish, and nothing to the purpose; that they *conceive labour, and bring forth iniquity*: that they are sitting day and night upon the *eggs of asps*, (most poisonous serpents) which

if they eat will bring present death; and if they hatch, will turn out serpents, and destroy them. That all their works are but spending their bowels in weaving spiders webs, which can never cloath them; unprofitable works, fit for nothing but to catch flies: that their thoughts and devices are all vain and unprofitable; and that their ways lead to destruction; that their paths are crooked; and that there is no judgment in their step; and that whosoever treadeth in them, knoweth no peace. O see how pathetically the holy Spirit has here described the pains and labours poor worldlings take in the pursuit of lying madneſſes, which bring all kind of evils and death to their souls, without any manner of real profit, or pleasure: and learn thou to be more wise than to walk in their footſteps.

Conclude never to imitate this wretched choice of blind mortals, who turn away from God to follow after cheating vanities: but to despise from thy heart all those childish toys, and to turn to the charming paths of wisdom, virtue and truth.

JAN. 25. *On the conversion of St. Paul.*

CONSIDER first, and admire the wonders of the grace of God, in the conversion of St. Paul, suddenly changed from a fiery zealot for the Jews religion, and a bloody persecutor of the church of Christ, to be a fervent Christian, a zealous preacher of the Gospel, a vessel of election to carry the name of Christ to nations and kings, a doctor of the Gentiles, an Apostle of Jesus Christ, and a most eminent Saint. Learn from hence the greatness of God's mercy, and the power of his grace: learn never to despair of the conversion of any one, how remote soever he may seem from the faith, or grace of God. Who could be more remote than the convert of this day? Assure thyself that the hand of God is not shortened: and that his power, mercy and goodness is as great now as ever: and therefore never cease to pray to God for the conversion of infidels and sinners. It is likely the conversion of St. Paul is in a great measure owing to the prayers of St. Stephen. Join with the

the church on this day, in glorifying God, and returning him thanks through Jesus Christ, for the wonders of his mercy and grace in St. Paul, and the many thousands he has brought through his preaching to the ways of truth and life.

Consider 2dly, that the conversion of St. Paul is, by the church, set before our eyes this day, as a model of a perfect conversion, from which sinners may learn, 1st, how readily they ought to correspond with the calls and graces of God inviting them home, 2. how they ought to yield themselves up entirely to him, and 3. what their lives ought afterwards to be, in consequence of that distinguishing mercy which God has shewn them in their conversion. Paul was no sooner called by the voice of Jesus Christ, but he presently obeyed the call, and yielded himself up to be his for ever. The prayer he then made was short in words, but very expressive of the perfect disposition of his soul in this regard, and of the sacrifice he desired to make of himself, without the least reserve, to the holy will of him that called him. *Lord, said he, what wilt thou have me to do?* As much as to say; *My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready:* here I am prostrate at thy feet, desirous only to know, and to do thy will; send me where thou pleasest; ordain concerning me what thou pleasest; I desire to be thine in life and death: I desire to have no exceptions at all to thy blessed will. See also, how being sent into the city, where he was to learn of Ananias the will of God, and to receive from him the sacrament of regeneration, for the washing away his sins; he there continues for three whole days, neither eating, nor drinking, but wholly employed in prayer. O this was shewing himself to be a convert indeed; this was being quite in earnest in preparing himself for his baptism; this was laying a solid foundation for a new life. O that all penitents would set this great example before their eyes, when they pretend to make their peace with God; and would, like Paul, prepare themselves, by fervent and long-continued prayer, joined with the exercises of mortification and penance! thus we should see other
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sort of conversions, than we commonly meet with now-a-days.

Consider 3dly, the sentiments of St. Paul, with regard to the life he looked upon himself obliged to lead, in consequence of the mercy God had shewed to him in his conversion. He had ever before his eyes the greatness of this mercy: he considered himself as having been, to his thinking, the greatest of all sinners; and how God had spared him all the while he went on in his sins; and, without any merit on his part, had, by an evident miracle, wrought in an instant, that total change in him: and therefore he was convinced, as he both declared in his words, and shewed forth in his practice, that he could do no less than devote his whole life to the love and service of his Saviour, to testify his gratitude for the love he had shewed to him. This consideration carried him through all his labours and afflictions, and animated him to meet death in all its shapes; (for he was *dying daily* as he tells us) because Christ had loved him, and had died for him; and therefore the love of Christ pressed him, that he might live no longer to himself, but to him who had shewed him mercy. O that all converts would have the like sentiments.

Conclude to learn in practice the lessons which St. Paul teaches you in his conversion, and in particular to have a great esteem of the grace of reconciliation, and of that unspeakable mercy and love, which God has shewed you, in receiving you again, after you had fallen from him by sin. Learn also from him to testify your gratitude, by dedicating yourselves hence-forward, in good earnest, to the love and service of him who has done such great things for you.

JAN. 26. *On the evil of mortal sin.*

CONSIDER first, the enormous malice of mortal sin, inasmuch as it is infinitely opposite to the infinite goodness of God; and thou wilt find it to be a bottomless pit, which no created understanding can fathom. As none but God himself can fully comprehend his own infinite goodness so none but God himself

self can perfectly comprehend the infinite enormity that is found in this opposite evil. And as God essentially loves his own goodness, with an infinite love, and cannot cease to love it, no more than he can cease to be God: so he essentially hates mortal sin with an infinite hatred; and cannot cease to hate it, wherever he sees it. And didst thou think, my soul, that thou was committing so great, so dreadful, so abominable an evil, when first thou rebelledst against thy God by mortal sin? O how couldst thou dare so often to repeat this enormous treason! or how couldst thou endure to carry about with thee, for so long a time, so odious, so hideous a monster? O how much art thou indebted to the boundless mercies of thy God, and to the precious blood of his Son, that he has tolerated thee so long, and not cast thee long ago into hell!

Consider 2dly, that there is not upon earth, no nor in hell itself, a greater evil than mortal sin: it is without any comparison, the greatest of all evils; it is the parent both of the devil and of hell, for hell was only made for mortal sin, and the devil was an angel till he was transformed into a devil by mortal sin. So that, in truth, mortal sin is a monster more hideous than hell; more filthy and abominable than the devil himself. This dreadful evil, which the damned see and feel, for all eternity, in the midst of their souls, torments them more than all the devils; it is this that oppresses them with its everlasting weight; it is this that feeds the ever-gnawing worm of their guilty conscience; it is this is the fewel of that fire that never is extinguished; it is this that eternally possesses their souls, and both keeps God eternally from them, and them eternally from God. Oh that sinners had but a just notion of this dreadful evil here! It would effectually keep them from feeling its enormous weight hereafter. If they did but sufficiently apprehend what they are going to do, when they offer to commit a mortal sin, they would choose a thousand deaths before so great an evil.

Consider 3dly, that what makes sin the greatest of all evils, is because it strikes at God himself. It is a rebellion;

lion; it is a high treason against him. Satan, the first sinner, proudly sought to place himself in the throne of God; and all that unhappily follow the example of this arch-rebel, by consenting to mortal sin, are, in some measure, guilty of the like perversity: inasmuch as they turn away from God, as he did, affecting, in the like manner, an independency on God; and impiously prefer their own will, and the gratifying their own inclinations and passions before his holy will, and his divine ordinances. Thus they renounce their allegiance to him, and disclaim his authority and sovereignty over them; they refuse to be subject to his laws: they condemn his wisdom; they flight his justice; they abuse his mercy and goodness; and instead of seeking in the first place (as upon all accounts they are bound to do) the glory of their Maker's name, the propagation of his kingdom, and the fulfilling of his will, they set up that idol self in the place of the living God; they seek their own worldly honour, interest, and pleasure, more than his: and to this unhappy idol of their own self-love, they sacrifice their soul and conscience, their God and all. And can there be any other evil comparable to this?

Conclude utterly to renounce, detest, and abhor, for the time to come, all mortal sin; and to fly it more than hell itself. And as to all thy past guilt in this kind, bewail it from thy heart as the greatest of all evils, and do penance for it all thy life-time.

JAN. 27. *On the manifold aggravations that are found in mortal sin.*

CONSIDER first, that, besides the bottomless depth of the malice of mortal sin, from its opposition to the infinite goodness of God, and the high treason it contains against his divine majesty, there are divers other enormities and most heinous aggravations in every mortal sin, that beyond measure extend and multiply its guilt. The first of these is the sinner's black ingratitude to God, which is a circumstance that violently aggravates the guilt of every sin he committs against his Maker and

and Redeemer, his ancient lover, his dearest friend, and perpetual benefactor; from whom he has received, and daily receives, all that he has, and all that he is; and this out of pure love, without any desert on his part, and such a love as can suffer no comparison, since it has brought the lover down from heaven, to die for this very wretch that dares thus ungratefully to offend him, and to crucify him again by sin. I know not whether any of the devils in hell, if God had done so much for them, would ever have been so ungrateful as to offend him any more.

Consider 2dly, the manifold injustice that is found in every mortal sin, in the violation of all the rights and titles that God has to us, and to our love and service; as he is our first beginning, and our last end, who made us, and made us for himself: as he is the very being of our beings, the great monarch of the whole creation, the Lord of us and of all things; as he has purchased us for himself, and marked us out for his own; and we, on our part, have been solemnly dedicated and consecrated to him, that we might be his both for time and eternity. The wretched sinner breaks through all these considerations; withdraws himself from his Maker, his King, his Lord, and his Redeemer; villainously and sacrilegiously alienates from him, what, upon all these titles, is strictly his; and makes all over to his mortal enemy; and, in exchange for some petty trifle, he sells to him both his soul and his God. And does not such an enormous injustice cry to heaven for vengeance? More especially in Christians; in whom it is joined with the aggravating circumstances of a profanation of the temple of God; and of a notorious perfidiousness, by the violation of their solemn vows and engagements made to him.

Consider 3dly, that in every mortal sin, there is found in some measure the guilt of the breach of all the ten commandments, according to that of St. James ii. 10. *He that offends in one point is guilty of all.* Because, whosoever willfully breaks through any part of the divine law by mortal sin, violates the first commandment,

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by turning away from the true and living God, and refusing him the worship that is due to him, he is guilty of idolatry, by worshipping the creature, which is the object, or occasion of his sin, rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Rom. 1. He profanes the sacred name of God, and blasphemes him, if not in words, at least in facts, by treading his authority under foot. He violates the true and everlasting sabbath of God's rest, by the servile work of sin, by which he makes himself a slave to Satan. He dishonours, in a most outrageous manner, the best of fathers. He is guilty of the murder of his own soul, and of the Son of God himself, whom he crucifies by sin. He is guilty of a spiritual adultery, by prostituting to Satan his soul which has been espoused to Christ. He is guilty of theft, robbery, and sacrilege, as we have seen above, by taking away from God what belongs to him. He bears false witness in fact against the law of God, in favour of lies and deceit, for all sin is a lie. And, that nothing may be wanting to compleat his wickedness, he is guilty of coveting what is not his, and what he has no right to; and what the law of God restrains him from. So manifold is the guilt that is found in any one wilful sin.

Conclude to detest the ingratitude, injustice, perfidiousness, and all the other aggravations, that are found in mortal sin; and to make it thy continual prayer, that thou mayest rather die ten thousand deaths, than once incur this dreadful complication of all evils.

JAN. 28. *On the presumption, folly, and madness, of the wilful sinner.*

CONSIDER first, the desperate presumption of a worm of the earth, that dares to attack, by wilful sin, the Almighty Lord and Maker of heaven and earth; who holds the thread of his life in his hand, and can in that moment let him drop into hell. And what can the wretch expect from making war with God? With a God who is eternal, immense, and every way infinite: a God whose eye is ever upon all his ways; and who has an infinite hatred for mortal sin: a God without

whom he can neither live, move, nor be? What then can he expect from making this God his enemy, but the loss of all manner of good, and the incurring of all misery, both temporal and eternal. Alas! from the moment he engages in this desperate war, the sword of God is drawn against him, and continually hangs over his guilty head, and the perils of death, judgment, and hell, encompass him on all sides. The captain himself, whom he follows in this warfare, is already damned; his fellow-soldiers are daily falling down the precipice, and crowding into hell; and what has he to hope for?

Consider 2dly, the folly and madness that is found in every wilful sin: forasmuch as the wilful sinner, by his own act and deed, freely and deliberately parts with his God, an infinite good, and the source of all his good; gives up his title to heaven, together with all his treasures of virtue, grace, and merit, and sells his soul into the bargain, to be a slave to Satan here, and a victim of hell hereafter: and in exchange for all this, he purchases nothing but bubbles and shadows, that are unable to afford him one moment of solid content, that leave nothing behind them but uneasiness and remorse; and continually expose him to all kind of misery, both for time and eternity? And is it possible to conceive a greater madness than this? Alas! it is exchanging heaven for hell, God for the devil, the supreme and infinite good, for the very abyss of endless and infinite evils.

Consider 3dly, the folly and madness of sinners in looking for any success in their ways, or blessing on their undertakings, whilst they oppose, by wilful sin, the holy will of God, and violate his divine law and commandments. All men have an in-bred desire of their own well-being; this the sinner pretends to seek in the unhappy choice he makes, whenever he indulges himself in sin: but alas! in vain does he seek it where it is not to be found. He seeks for happiness in the way that leads to all kind of misery; he seeks for honour in that, which is in itself most disgraceful, and which strips him of all true honour; he seeks an imaginary gain

gain in that which brings with it the greatest of all losses: he seeks for pleasure, and meets with pain, discontent, and uneasiness: he seeks for peace and joy, and finds nothing but disturbance and sorrow: he seeks for a false liberty, and falls into true slavery: he seeks for life, but all in vain; because he seeks it in the region of death. And can any thing be more extravagant and mad, than to seek for any good, whilst one wilfully turns one's back upon the source of all good? Alas! the soul here experiences to her cost, in the opposition and disappointments she meets with, in all her projects and all her pursuits, the truth of those menaces of God by the prophet Osee, *Osee ii. 6. &c.* *I will hedge up thy way with thorns, and I will stop it up with a wall; and she shall not find her paths. And she shall follow after her lovers, and shall not overtake them; and she shall seek them, and shall not find them, &c.* For it is even thus the poor sinner, in all he turns to, when he turns away from God, meets with a hedge of thorns in his way, which he cannot pass over, and runs after a shadow that flies away from him.

Conclude to be more wise, and to seek thy happiness where it is to be found, that is, in the love and service of God: if thou seek it any where else, thou shalt lose thy labour; and be in danger of losing thyself too, and of condemning thy folly and madness for a long eternity.

JAN. 29. *On the dismal havock sin has made in the world.*

CONSIDER first, the havock this monstrous evil of wilful sin made, in its first conception, in heaven itself; when one sin, consented to but in thought, changed in an instant millions of most beautiful Angels into ugly devils; cast them out of heaven, and condemned them eternally to hell. 'O dreadful poison, that canst thus blast in a moment so many legions of heavenly spirits! O dreadful guilt, that canst draw such a dismal, and irrevocable judgment from a God, whose very nature is goodness, and who loves all his works, upon his favourite creatures! And thou, my soul, that

knowedst this, how didst thou ever dare to sin? And how hath thy God been able to endure thee, under the guilt of so many treasons?

Consider 2dly, the havock sin has made upon earth, when this monster, banished from heaven, was entertained by our first parents, in the earthly paradise. Alas! in one moment it stript them and all their race of that original justice, innocence and sanctity in which they were created, and of all the gifts of divine grace; it wounded them in all the powers of the soul; it gave them up to the tyranny of Satan, it cast them out of paradise, and condemned them both to a temporal and eternal death. In the mean time it let loose upon them a whole army of all manner of evils, both of foul and body; which are all of them the dismal consequences of sin; and has entailed upon all mankind an inexpressible weakness with regard to the doing of good; and a violent inclination to evil; which has filled the world with innumerable sins, and with innumerable most dreadful judgments both upon particulars, and upon whole nations, in punishment of it.

Consider 3dly, that sin by infecting and corrupting so many of the principal creatures of God, has in some measure blasted the whole creation, and subjected the whole to many evils, which the Apostle (*Rom. viii. 20, 21.*) calls *the servitude of corruption*, inasmuch as God's creatures are abused by men and devils, and made subservient to sin and corruption; as also *vanity*, inasmuch as by occasion of sin, they are also liable to a perpetual instability, and a variety of defects. Hence the whole creation, by a figure of speech, is said by the Apostle *to groan*, and *to be in labour*; longing as it were for its deliverance from its unhappy subjection to sin, *into the liberty of the glory of the children of God*; which shall then be accomplished, when the reign of sin shall be utterly abolished; and the world being purged by the last fire, God shall make for his children, *new heavens, and a new earth, in which justice shall dwell.* *2 Peter iii. 13.* O when shall that happy hour come! When shall this hellish monster sin be for ever excluded from all other parts of
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the creation; and shut up in its proper place, never to come out to blast the world any more!

Conclude to abhor the evil that has made such dreadful havock both in heaven and earth; and to spare no pains for the abolishing it both in thyself, and in all others.

JAN. 30. *On the dismal havock sin makes in the Soul of a Christian.*

CONSIDER first, how strangely the soul is changed, that falls from the state of grace into mortal sin. The metamorphose is not unlike to that of an angel into a devil. A soul in grace is a child of God, a spouse of Jesus Christ, a temple of the Holy Spirit. But in the moment she consents to mortal sin, she forfeits all her honour and dignity; she becomes a slave of hell, a prostitute to Satan, a den of unclean spirits. A soul in grace is beautiful, like an angel, and agreeable to the eyes of God and his saints: but a soul in mortal sin is ugly like the devil, and most odious, filthy and loathsome to her Maker, and all his heavenly court. A soul in grace is very rich, she is worth an eternal kingdom; she always carries her God about with her, and is entitled to the eternal possession of him; but when she falls into mortal sin, she loses at once all her store of virtue and merit, she becomes wretchedly poor and miserable, and instead of possessing God, she is possessed by the devil.

Consider 2dly, that sin gives a mortal wound to the soul; it is the death of the soul. For as it is the soul of man that gives life to the body; and when the soul is departed, the body is dead; and becomes a lump of clay, without either sense or motion: so it is the grace of God that gives life to the soul; and that soul is dead, which by mortal sin has lost her God, and drove away his grace from her. O dismal separation! O dreadful death indeed, which wanteth nothing but eternity to make it hell! Sinners, how can you endure yourselves under this wretched condition? If a dead carcase, from which the soul is gone, be so very loathsome and fright-

ful, that few would endure to pass one night in the same bed with such a bed-fellow; how can you bear to carry continually about with you, night and day, a filthy carcass of a foul dead in mortal sin; and quite putrified and corrupted by her sinful habits? Ah! open your eyes now at least, to see your deplorable case; and to detest the monster sin, the cause of all your misery. O run to him, without any further delay, by humble prayer, and repentance, who alone can raise the dead to life.

Consider gdlly, how true that is of the scripture, that *they that commit sin and iniquity are enemies to their own soul*, Tob. xii. 10. And that *he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul*, Ps. x. 6. Since of all the evils that we can possibly incur, either here or hereafter, there is none comparable to the evil we bring upon ourselves by mortal sin. Because all that they can do, as long as we do not consent to sin, cannot hurt the soul; whereas we ourselves, by consenting to any one mortal sin, bring upon our own souls, a dreadful death, both for time and eternity. Good God! never suffer us to be so wretchedly blind, as to become thus the wilful murderers of our own souls.

Conclude never more to join thyself with thy mortal enemies the world, the flesh, or the devil, in waging war against thy own soul by wilful sin. But make it thy continual prayer to God, that he would never suffer thee at any rate to consent to so great an evil; though thou wert even to endure a thousand deaths for the refusal.

JAN. 31. *On the judgments of God upon mortal sin.*

CONSIDER first, that besides all the sad effects of mortal sin, already mentioned, which are more than sufficient to demonstrate how heinous this worst of evils is in the sight of God; there still remain divers other convincing arguments of the hatred God bears to it, from the manifold judgments he has of old, and daily does, execute upon them that are guilty of it; and will continue to execute, to the end of the world, and even to all eternity. Witness of old the judgment of the deluge,

luge, which in punishment of the general corruption of all flesh, swept off at once all the sinners of the earth, and hurried them down to hell. Witness the judgment of fire from heaven on Sodom and the neighbouring cities: witness the many judgments on the rebel Israelites in the wilderness; particularly that remarkable one of the earth opening, and swallowing up alive Kore and his companions; and the fire from the Lord, destroying in an instant fourteen thousand seven hundred of their abettors, *Numb. xvi.* Witness, in every age of the world, millions that have been hurried away when they least expected it, by violent or untimely death in punishment of their crying sins; besides many instances of flourishing cities, yea, and of whole nations too destroyed by wars, pestilences, famines, earthquakes, &c. all brought upon them by their sins. O great God! who shall not fear thy almighty wrath, which always looks towards wilful sinners? who shall not fear the dreadful evil of mortal sin, which thus provokes thy avenging justice?

Consider edly, that though these visible judgments of God upon impenitent sinners, by which they are snatched away before their time by unprovided death in the midst of their sins, be both very common, and very terrible: yet there is another kind of more secret judgments, which he daily executes upon thousands, which is far more terrible; inasmuch as it brings upon them a far more dreadful damnation. And that is, when in punishment of their abuse of grace, and obstinacy in sin, he gives them up at length to a reprobate sense, and to a blindness and hardness of heart: so that they have now no more any fear, or thought of God, or his judgments, or any concern at all for their souls, or for eternity. Now this is indeed the broad road to final impenitence, and is in its consequence the very worst of all God's judgments. It was thus he did by the Jews, according to the prediction of the royal prophet, *Ps. lxviii.*, *letting their eyes be darkned, that they should not see; and bowing down their back always--adding iniquity upon their iniquity, &c. viz. by withdrawing his*

his lights and his graces from them; and so giving them up to their own wicked inclinations: and thus he daily does with thousands of habitual sinners, in punishment of their slighting and resisting his repeated calls, *Prov.* i. 24. &c. suffering them to go on in their wretched ways, and to add daily sin upon sin, (without ever thinking of repentance) and consequently hell upon hell; which proves at long run a far more dreadful judgment upon them, than if upon their first sin, the earth had opened, and swallowed them down alive into hell.

Consider 3dly, the judgments of God upon mortal sin, in the eternal duration of the torments of hell. O sinners go down, now whilst you are alive, into that bottomless pit; and take a serious view of the rigour of God's justice there, of that worm that never dies, of that fire that never is extinguished, of that everlasting rage and despair: and of all that complication of the worst of evils, that is to be found in that woeful dungeon: and then tell me what you think of the hatred God must bear to every mortal sin; when he, who is infinitely good, and infinitely just, and cannot punish any one beyond what he richly deserves, condemns every soul that dies under any such guilt, to all this extremity of misery, for all eternity. Surely the dismal prospect of this scene of wo, must suffice to convince you of the enormity of mortal sin. But if any thing be here wanting to a full conviction; turn your eyes upon Jesus Christ the Son of God: and see how he was treated by the justice of his Father, for our sins, which he had taken upon himself to expiate: see him agonizing in the garden, and sweating blood, under their enormous weight: see the multitude and variety of torments he endures for them, till his expiring upon a cruel and disgraceful cross; and how notwithstanding the infinite dignity of his person, the divine justice would admit of nothing less than of all these sufferings of his own Son for the expiation of any one mortal sin: and I am persuaded that the sight of a God, crucified for sin, must more effectually demonstrate to you the hatred God bears

bears to this monstrous evil; than the fight of hell itself, with all its dreadful and everlasting torments.

Conclude by giving thanks to God for having spared thee so long in thy sins: and resolving now to labour in earnest to avert, by a serious and speedy conversion, those judgments, which thou mayest have reason to apprehend, are actually hanging over thy head for thy sins.

FEBRUARY 1. *On not making light of venial sins.*

CONSIDER first, that although there be no manner of comparison between the guilt of a mortal sin, and that of a venial sin; as there is no manner of comparison between a mote and a beam, *Matt. vii. 3*. Yet the guilt even of the least venial sin, considering that it is an offence of a God, infinitely great, and infinitely good, is so displeasing in his sight, that no soul that is stained with it, can ever be admitted into his presence, till this guilt be purged away; and no man living can be allowed, by any power in heaven or on earth, to commit any one venial sin; nor not to save a kingdom, or even to save the whole world: because the offence of God is a greater evil, than the loss of the whole world: and we are not to do any thing that is evil to save the whole world. Christians, do you think of this, when upon every trifling apprehension of incurring the displeasure of man, you take refuge in a lie, which is sure to displease your God? Do you think of this, when you go on with so little concern, indulging yourselves in vanity, curiosity, sensuality, loss of your precious time, anger, impatience, and other sinful habits, upon the notion that these are but venial sins; and therefore need not be regarded? Oh! you will find one day to your cost, how much you have been deceived, if you do not correct in time this dangerous and pernicious error.

Consider 2dly, the danger, to which the soul exposes herself, when she makes light of venial sins; even the danger of the very worst of evils, that is, of mortal sin, and of all its dreadful consequences, both for time and eternity:

eternity: according to that of the wise-man, Ecclus. xix. *He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little.* It is true, venial sin does not of itself immediately destroy, or drive away from the soul the grace and love of God: and therefore does not of itself bring present death to the soul, as mortal sin does: but then it weakens and cools the fervour of divine love, it lessens devotion, it hinders the inspirations of the Holy Ghost from working effectually in the soul, it leaves the soul feeble and drowsy, sick and languishing; so that upon the coming of a greater temptation she easily yields, and quickly falls into mortal sin. And how can we expect it should be otherwise, when we have so little regard to God, or his friendship and love, as not to care how much we displease him, provided we can but escape his avenging justice? Or how can the fire of the love of God be kept alive for any long time in the soul, when instead of being nourished with its proper fuel, it is continually losing ground, by a diminution of its heat and strength?

Consider godly, that this danger of falling quickly into mortal sin, by making little or no account of venial sins, is the greater, because of the difficulty there often is of distinguishing betwixt what is mortal sin and what is only venial: since even the best divines are often at a loss, to find the limits between the one and the other. So that all such as are in the unhappy disposition, of venturing without scruple, as far as the utmost limits of venial sin can be extended; are daily exposed to an evident danger, of slipping beyond the bounds, and of falling into the pit of mortal sin: the more because of the manifold subtleties and deceits of self-love, which is ever ready to favour, and to excuse the inclinations of corrupt nature; and in all such cases to make that appear slight, which is really grievous: and the more still, when persons give themselves up to a tepid, negligent life, as they generally do, who make light of venial sins: for this negligence takes the soul off from her guard, disarms her, and lays her interior open to the spiritual sins of pride, envy, and such like disorders; which are mortal

mortal sins; and which easily prevail over careless souls, and are seldom thoroughly cured.

Conclude with a sincere resolution of never wilfully, and with full deliberation, consenting to any one known sin, how venial soever it may seem to be; and much more of never indulging any habit or custom of any such sins. It is hard to reconcile the indulging such habits as these with the great commandment of the love of God above all things: at least it cannot be expected that divine love should abide to dwell for any long time in a heart where God is so often slighted.

FEB. 2. *On CANDLEMAS DAY.*

CONSIDER first, that on this day, the blessed Virgin Mary, according to the rites prescribed by the ancient law, came to the temple of God, to be purified after her child-bearing, and to make her offering, according to what her poverty allowed, of a pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons, the one for a whole burnt-offering, the other as a sacrifice for sin. *Levit. xii.* Admire her ready *obedience* to a law, in which in reality she was not concerned, being exempted, by that singular privilege of hers of bringing forth her Son, without any detriment to her virginal purity. Admire her *humility*, in being willing to pass for a person unclean, she that was more pure than the Angels; and to be excluded for forty days from touching any thing that was holy, or coming near the house of God; and to be cleansed, by a sin-offering, as if she needed any such expiation. Admire her love of *purity*, which brought her on this day to the temple of God, to be there *purified* with these legal sacrifices; because she was desirous of omitting nothing, that could any ways contribute to increase, or maintain *purity*. And learn to imitate these three great virtues, *viz.* her ready obedience, her profound humility, and her great zeal and love for purity.

Consider 2dly, that on this day, the blessed Virgin made a rich present to God, in his temple, infinitely surpassing all the offerings that had ever been made there

there before; when, according to the law of the *first-born*, Exod. xiii. she presented her Son, the first-born of the whole creation, by whom all things were made both visible and invisible, to his eternal Father. Parents learn to imitate this presentation, by making an offering of your children to God, by the hands of Mary, to be dedicated for ever to his love and service. Christians, learn to present him with your hearts, together with all their offspring, your thoughts, words, and deeds: learn to make an offering to him of your whole being, every day, and every hour of your life. But then you must not stop here: you must also present to him his Son Jesus Christ, and yourselves with him, and through him; daily in the sacred mysteries; and hourly in the spiritual temple of your souls. The temple of God in Jerusalem was highly honoured on this day, by the presence of the Son of God, according to that prophecy of Aggeus, c. ii. *The desired of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory: saith the Lord of hosts.*—*Great shall be the glory of this last house more than of the first, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place I will give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.* My soul, art not thou ambitious of a share in this glory, peace, and happiness? Invite then this same Son of God, *the desired of all nations*, into thy inward house; and he will come and make thee the temple of his glory, and bring thee his true peace, which will make thee happy indeed.

Consider 3dly, that on this day the venerable Simeon, who had received a promise from the Holy Ghost, that he should see the Saviour of the world before he died; coming by divine instinct into the temple, whilst our Lord was presented there, took him into his arms, and declared him to be the promised Messias, the glory of Israel, and the light of all nations. At the same time that holy widow Anna the prophetess, who for a great number of years had attended on the Lord in his temple by continual prayer and fasting, was also favoured with the like grace, and made the like public profession of her faith in our infant Saviour. This sacred meeting of so many persons of such eminent sanctity, in the temple

ple of God, in company with the Son of God, and his blessed mother, the church celebrates in the procession of this day; which we make, with lighted candles in our hands, that are solemnly blessed in the name of Christ, and received from the hand of God's priest, as emblems of the light of Christ. See then, Christian Souls, with what affection of devotion you ought to receive, and to bear in your hands, these hallowed candles, as figures of Christ. O! learn, on this occasion, of holy Simeon, to seek Christ alone, to sigh after him alone, to aspire with your whole souls after his embraces; despising all things else that you may find him. O remember that he is the true light of the world, in his life and doctrine; and determine from this time forward ever to follow him.

Conclude to study well all the lessons, which are to be learnt from the presentation of the Son of God, and the purification of his blessed mother; and to conform yourselves to them in the practice of your lives: that so being purified from all your sins, you may also be worthy to be one day presented to God, in the eternal temple of his glory.

FEB. 3. *On the parable of the labourers in the vineyard;*
St. Matt. xx.

For SEPTUAGESIMA Sunday.

CONSIDER first, that on this day we enter upon a time of devotion and penance, in the way of a preparation for the solemn fast of Lent: and therefore we are called upon by the church, both in the Epistle, and in the Gospel of this Sunday, to begin, now at least, to be quite in earnest, in the great concern of our souls. In the Epistle, we are put in mind by St. Paul (*1 Cor. ix. and x.*) that we are all here running in a race, in which we must push forward with all our power, or we shall lose the prize: that we are engaged in a conflict, for an incorruptible crown; which is not to be obtained without much labour and self-denial. That if we are not in earnest, notwithstanding all the distinguishing

favours we have received, and daily do receive from God; we shall be in great danger, to be excluded, like the Israelites, from the true land of promise. In the parable of the Gospel, we are put in mind, that we have but one business in this world, which is here represented under the figure of labouring in the vineyard of our Lord: that in this labour we are to spend the short day of our mortal life; and by persevering till night in this labour, we are to secure to our souls the wages of a happy eternity. O let us attend well that we may learn these great lessons!

Consider 2dly, in the parable of this day's Gospel, the infinite goodness of God, manifested to us, in that perpetual attention of his, in every age, since the beginning of the world, and in every part of the life of man, to go out by his divine graces and calls; and to invite, to hire and to send labourers into his vineyard. And after all what need has he of our labours; or of what service can we be to him? Or what can we give him, which he does not first give to us? Why then does he press us to labour, in his vineyard? O! It is his pure goodness and love; that he may make us for ever happy by our serving him here, and enjoying him hereafter. But what then is the meaning of this *vineyard* of our Lord? And what is this labour that he calls for at our hands? *The vineyard of the Lord of hosts, saith the prophet Isaías (C. v. 7.) is the house of Israel,* that is, the people of God. Yes: our own souls are the vineyard we are commanded to cultivate: no one can be excused from his share in this labour: every one must at least take care of one. To labour here to the purpose, we must in the first place root out the poisonous weeds of sinful habits; and cut up all the thorns and briars of our vices and passions; and then we must plant in their stead the good plants of Christian virtues; and bring them on, by proper care and manure, till they are capable of bringing forth fruit, that may answer the expectation of the great Lord and master of the vineyard, and be agreeable to him. O how happy shall we be, if by our labours, and his blessing, we so cultivate

cultivate this little part of the Lord's vineyard, that falls to our share, as to engage him to come to us, and re-create himself there with us!

Consider 3dly, Christian souls, how early in the morning, your good God invited you to work in his vineyard, by the early knowledge he gave you of himself, and of the end for which he brought you into the world; and how frequently he has pressed you ever since, by his repeated graces and calls, in every part of your life, to oblige you to set about this work in good earnest. But can you say, you have yet begun? May he not justly reproach you, as he did those whom he found standing in the market place, at the eleventh hour; *why stand you here all the day idle?* Alas! are you not *idle*, when you are doing nothing to the purpose? And has not your whole life hitherto been spent, in doing nothing to your purpose? Nothing to answer the great end, the only business, for which you were made? Have you not then been truly idle all the day, that is all the time of your life? O begin now at least to labour: perhaps this is your last hour: your day is far spent: the night is coming on, *when no man can work.* John ix. 4. Work therefore now, whilst you have time; lest being surprised by the night, you may have no more time to work in, and so starve for eternity.

Conclude to make good use of this fresh summons, by which you are called upon this day, by God and his church, to go, and to labour in the vineyard of your souls; lest otherwise by not corresponding with the call, and by receiving this grace of God in vain, you verify in yourselves, that sentence, with which our Lord concludes the parable of this Sunday: *Many are called, but few are chosen.*

FEB. 4. *On the multitude of our sins.*

2. **C**ONSIDER, O my soul, how long it is since thou wast first so miserable as to fall from thy God by sin: and how much thy sins have been multiplied since that unhappy hour. Alast! didst thou not

at thy first coming to the use of reason, forfeit thy baptismal innocence, and fall a prey to that hellish monster? It was thy indispensable duty, in consequence of thy creation, of thy redemption, and of thy baptismal engagements, to turn to God, as soon as thou wast capable of knowing him, as to thy first beginning, and last end; and to dedicate thyself eternally to his love and service. And didst thou comply with this strict obligation? Lucifer and his companions were cast down headlong into hell, because immediately after they were created, instead of turning to God, as they were bound to do, and dedicating themselves wholly to him, they turned away from him, to take pride in themselves; and hast thou not imitated these rebels, at the first dawning of thy reason, by turning also thy back upon God, and by preferring thy own irregular inclinations, and every senseless toy, before him?

2. Consider, how after so wretched a beginning, thou hast gone on for so many years, daily adding sin to sin; against God, against thy neighbour, against thyself, by work, by word, or by desire: so that not one day, perhaps not even one hour, has yet passed, without frequently offending God, either by commission, or omission, by ignorance, frailty or malice. Alas! my poor soul, is it not true that even from thy childhood, thou wast given to lies, passion and impurity? Is it not true, that even then thy thoughts went continually astray from God, after lying fooleries and vanities: that thy prayers were without attention; thy confessions without sincerity, repentance, or amendment: and thy whole life and conversation, without any true sense of God, or any solid good? And hast thou grown any better, by growing older? Or hast thou not rather multiplied thy sins; and still more and more corrupted, and defiled all thy powers and faculties, and all thy senses and members, with repeated offences and treasons; and continually perverted and abused all the gifts of God against the giver? O! pass over in thy mind (*but let it be in the bitterness of thy soul*) all thy years: and lament to find, that thy sins have been indeed far more numerous

rous than the hairs of thy head, besides an infinite multitude of hidden sins, or sins which thou hast occasioned in others, which keep out of sight at present; but will all one day appear against thee.

3. Consider, to the end thou mayest make a better judgment of the immense number of thy offences and transgressions, how little thou hast complied, in any part of thy life, with the great duty of *loving God with thy whole heart*; of dedicating thy whole self to his service, and of directing, by a pure intention, all thy thoughts, words, and actions to him: how little restraint thou hast put upon thy natural inclinations, too strongly bent on evil, from thy very childhood: how little guard thou hast kept upon thy roving thoughts and imaginations: how little attention thou hast had not to offend in words; nor to give occasion of offence to others, &c. Reflect also how much of thy precious time thou hast squandered away; how many graces thou hast received in vain; how little thou hast corresponded with the divine calls and inspirations; how little use thou hast made of the talents, with which thou hast been intrusted: and how very ill thou hast discharged thyself of thy stewardship, in every part of thy life. And then see what armies of sins will presently rise up before thy eyes, and stand staring thee in the face. And how wilt thou dare after so much guilt, and so much ingratitude, which is a perpetual aggravation of every one of thy sins, to lift up thy eyes any more to heaven, or so much as to name the holy name of God, which thou hast so often profaned?

Conclude to be always humble, by a true sense and daily remembrance of thy innumerable sins; to offer up daily for them the sacrifice of a contrite and humble heart; and to embrace henceforward a penitential life, as the best security after so much guilt.

FEB. 5. *On the goodness of God in waiting for sinners.*

CONSIDER first, the wonders of God's goodness in his dealings with sinners. See with what patience he bears with them, and that very often for a long time; notwithstanding their repeated provocations, their continually abusing all his bounty and mercy, and that infinite hatred he always bears to mortal sin, wherever he sees it. O my soul, how much art thou indebted to this patience of thy God, in bearing with thee, all these years past, ever since thy first fall into sin! Alas! hast thou not all this time been playing upon the very brink of that dreadful precipice which conducts to the bottomless pit? Hast thou not been all this while within a hair's breadth of a miserable eternity? Is it not true, that every night thou hast gone to bed, thou didst not know but that before the morning thou mightest find thyself in hell? Millions have fallen into that dismal dungeon of endless wo, whilst thy God hath spared thee: millions are now burning in those unquenchable flames for fewer sins than thou hast committed. O blessed to all eternity be the infinite goodness of my God; and may all his Angels and Saints praise and glorify him for ever, for having endured me so long; for having preserved me all this time, and continually watched over me; or else my soul had long since dwelt in hell?

Consider 2dly, the many ways by which God seeks to reclaim sinners, and to call them home to him. Reflect on the remorses, and inward reproaches of conscience, with which he visits them; the terrors of his judgment, and the allurements of his mercies, which he sets before them. See how he is continually calling upon them, by his word, by his preachers, by good books, by good examples, and wholesome admonitions, and by a number of interiour invitations and graces. Has he not dealt thus with thee, my soul, all this time thou hast been going astray from him? And what is the meaning of all this goodness of thy God to such an undeserving, ungrateful, and obstinate rebel? Why, it is nothing

nothing else but his own pure mercy and love, in consideration of the precious blood of his Son. And shall not all this love of his for thee soften thy heart, and oblige thee, now at least, to resolve in good earnest, to return to him: lest otherwise mercy, being long abused, should give place to justice: and the land which has been so often watered with rain from heaven, and still continues to bring forth nothing but thorns and briars, should fall at length under a dreadful curse, and be condemned to the fire? *Heb. vi.*

Consider 3dly, what encouragement God gives to all sinners to return to him. *As I live, saith the Lord, I desire not the death of a sinner: but that he may be converted from his ways, and may live. O why will you die, O house of Israel?* Ezech, xxxiii. *Return to me and live,* chap. xviii. *Thou hast gone astray after many lovers, but return to me, and I will receive thee,* Jeremias iii. See with what love the good shepherd in the Gospel goes after the lost sheep; and with what joy he lays it upon his shoulders, and brings it home to the fold. See how the father runs out to meet the prodigal child, when he returns home from the husks of the swine; see how he embraces him, cloaths him with the best robe, and makes a feast for him, *Luke xv.* Reflect how the Son of God, when here upon earth, treated the penitent Magdalene, the thief upon the cross, and all other sinners that had recourse to his mercy: and how he has declared, that there is more joy in heaven over one penitent sinner, than over ninety nine just, &c. And let all these instances and testimonies of his goodness to poor sinners, encourage and determine us to stay no longer away from him by sin; but to arise without delay, and to return to so good, to so loving a father, by a thorough conversion.

Conclude to abuse no longer the mercies of God, by continuing in sin, but to turn to him, now at least, with thy whole heart; and never to depart from him any more.

FEB. 6. *On turning from sin to God.*

CONSIDER first, that every wilful sinner is guilty of two enormous evils: according to that of Jerem. ii. 12, 13. *Be astonished, O ye heavens-----For my people have done two evils. They have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have digged to themselves cisterns (pits,) broken cisterns that can hold no water.* Yes, Christians, in every mortal sin, there are always these two exceeding great evils: *viz.* the turning away from a God infinitely good, and the very fountain of all goodness and life; and the embracing in his stead, that hellish monster sin; by the allurement of some deceitful appearance of an imaginary happiness, justly compared by the prophet, to a broken cistern; that can hold no water, but only filth and mud. Wherefore, in the conversion of a sinner, there must also be always two principal ingredients, opposite to those two great evils: *viz.* the turning away from sin, with horror, detestation and sorrow, for having offended a God, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to us: and the returning back to God, to embrace his holy law, and to dedicate the years that remain of life to his obedience, service, and love. Happy conversion that thus brings the poor sinner back from the very worst of evils, to his sovereign good!

Consider 2dly, that this turning away of the soul from sin, which is a necessary ingredient of the sinner's conversion, must be *effectual*: that is, the soul must turn away from her sins in *effect*. She must not content herself with a slight sorrow for her sins; nor with faint purposes of amendment, nor with a half will; nor yet with making some weak efforts towards beginning a new life. But she must renounce her sins with her whole heart: she must detest them above all evils: she must even hate them worse than hell: she must fly and abhor like a pestilence all such company, or other occasions, as may expose her to the danger of relapsing into them: she must be absolutely and resolutely determined never more to return to them, upon any

any consideration whatsoever. This is being *penitent indeed*: But to pretend to be true converts, without leaving our sins, is all a mockery.

Consider 3dly, that the principal ingredient of the conversion of a sinner, is the turning to God with his whole heart: as the principal ingredient of sin is the turning away from God. Wherefore the true convert must not only leave the husks of the swine, which he has hitherto set his heart upon; but he must arise, and return to the embraces of his Father, with a contrite and humble, but loving heart, resolved henceforward to be the eternal servant of his divine love. He must remember that *many sins are forgiven to him that loveth much*, Luke vii. And that he that has been the greatest debtor, is the most obliged to love with his whole heart that merciful creditor, who shews so much love to him, in being so ready to discharge him of his great debts. In a word, a constant adhesion to God, by love and obedience, must be the perpetual busines of a true convert. His whole life, for the time he has yet to come, must be dedicated and consecrated to divine love. This is the best security for the remission of all his past sins: this is the best preservative from all sin for the future.

Conclude to shew thyself to be a true convert from sin to God, by renouncing all thy criminal affections, and sacrificing them all to the love of God; by hating what thou hast hitherto loved, and embracing with thy whole soul thy Lord and Saviour, crucified for the love of thee.

FEB 7. *On the sentiments of a penitent sinner.*

CONSIDER first, that according to the different steps that are usually taken in the sinner's conversion, different sentiments and affections gradually take possession of his soul. And first his faith, which was asleep before, awakened by serious consideration, or by hearing the word of God, or by reading good books, opens his eyes to discover in part at least, how odious, how filthy a monster, has hitherto had possession of his soul:

soul: and what dreadful dangers have surrounded him, all this time he has been in sin; and still threaten him, with the worst of judgments from God, both for time and eternity. This, by the help of the Holy Ghost, produces in his soul a wholesome fear of the justice of God, and of that miserable death, judgment, and hell, which are daily overtaking unrepenting sinners. Now this fear is usually the beginning of the greatest conversions. O how hard must that sinner be, whom neither the sight of the sword of God, hanging over his head, nor of a miserable death, following close at his heels, nor of hell opened under his feet, and just ready to swallow him down, can move to repentance!

Consider 2dly, that the sinner being alarmed with the terrors of divine justice, seeks to find how he may escape these dreadful evils, that continually threaten him on every side; and how he may rid himself of his sins, the true source of all these evils. And here the mercy and goodness of God, and the precious blood of the Son of God, shed for poor sinners, present themselves before the eyes of his soul; and encourage him to hope, that the same God, whose mercy has endured him so long in his sins; whose goodness has watched over him all this while, preserving him from innumerable evils, and loading him with innumerable benefits; who has purchased this soul of his for himself, at so dear a rate; and who has shed his own blood to wash him from these very sins; will certainly receive him, now he desires to return to him, (according to his repeated promises made to repenting sinners) as he has received millions of others, that have returned to him after sin. And in this hope, he firmly purposed to neglect no one thing, required on his part, towards obtaining the absolution and full remission of all his sins, and a perfect reconciliation with his God.

Consider 3dly, that the sinner being thus encouraged, and resolved to go, and present himself before the throne of divine grace, and there to sue for the pardon of all his sins, through the precious blood of the Son of God; betakes himself to fervent prayer, in order

der to obtain the necessary disposition of *a contrite and humble heart*, without which there is no admittance to mercy and grace. This *contrite and humble heart* is an excellent composition of three great virtues; viz. *penance*, *humility* and *divine love*; *penance* fills the soul with a horror, and deep sense of sorrow for sin committed, together with an ardent desire to abolish it at any rate: *humility* obliges the soul to condemn herself, by reason of her manifold crimes, as worthy of all manner of evils, and unworthy of the least good; and to sit down in the very lowest place, as the most wretched, the most ungrateful, and the most abominable of all creatures: and *divine love* teaches her to consider and detest in her sins, not so much the evil they bring upon her, as their infinite malice; from the infinite opposition they have to a God, infinitely good in himself, and infinitely good to her; and their enormous outrages against the Son of God, incarnate for the love of her. With these sentiments the true penitent endeavours to prepare and dispose himself for the confession of his sins, and absolution from them. And this is that *contrite and humble heart, which God never despises*. Psalm L.

Conclude if thou wouldst effectually turn from sin to God, to endeavour to walk in these steps; especially to meditate seriously upon the great truths that relate to eternity; and to labour with all thy power for the acquiring of a contrite and humble heart.

FEB. 8. *On doing penance for our sins.*

CONSIDER first, that sentence of our Lord, Luke xiii. 5. *Except you do penance, you shall all perish.* The virtue of *penance* always was, is, and ever will be, absolutely necessary for every soul, that has at any time in life, fallen from God by wilful sin. It is the only plank that can save them after the shipwreck, they have made of their innocence. *Aut paenitendum aut ardendum*, says an ancient father, either *penance*, or *hell fire*, there is no medium for wilful sinners: they must choose one of the two. Sin must be punished

nished either here or hereafter: either by the penitent sinner, or by divine justice. Hence the preaching of *penance* to such as had fallen from God by sin, was the great subject of the commission of the prophets, in the old Testament, and of the Apostles and all apostolic preachers in the new. Hence it was by preaching of *penance* and of the necessity of *bringing forth worthy fruits of penance*, that St. John Baptist was to prepare the people for Christ, *Matt.* iii. and our Lord himself opened his mission with the same theme, *Matt.* iv. Because there can be no other way to come to God and a happy eternity, but either the way of innocence: or when we have strayed from this, the way of *penance*.

Consider 2dly, that this virtue of *penance* does not only require of us that we should turn from sin to God, by a change of heart, and by a change of life; but also that we should labour to make satisfaction to the divine justice, by voluntary mortifications of the flesh, and other penitential exercises, for all the injuries and affronts we have offered him by our sins; and that by this means we should endeavour to discharge according to our weak ability the debt we owe to God for them. This is properly *doing penance* for our sins: this is what divine justice always expects: this is what the church of God has always called for from penitent sinners. We cannot be true penitents, without hating and detesting our sins above all evils, because they offend a God infinitely good: now this of necessity infers a hatred for this traitorous self-love of ours, and for all its irregular inclinations and passions, as enemies of God and the soul, and especially a hatred for this sinful flesh, that is so apt to betray us into this dreadful evil of sin. And hence again naturally flows in all true penitents, a sincere and effectual desire of punishing themselves for their sins, a desire of chastising this flesh by penitential exercises, and thereby doing their best to make satisfaction for their sins. This is, and ever was, one necessary ingredient of that
virtue

virtue of *penance*, without which the sinner could never be reconciled to an offended God,

Consider 3dly, how much this way of *doing penance* for our sins is inculcated in holy writ; where we are so often put in mind, of *turning to God with fasting, weeping and mourning*; of *doing penance in sack-cloth and ashes*, and the like; and where we meet with divers instances of the mercy and favour God is pleased to shew to all such as exercise themselves in these voluntary mortifications and humiliations of the flesh, when they are accompanied, as they ought to be, with a penitential spirit. Here also we learn, that no assurance we can possibly have of the remission of our sins, is to exempt us from doing penance for them, when we see that King David, notwithstanding the prophet had assured him that *the Lord had taken away his sin*, (2 Sam. xii, 13.) yet still continued to do penance for it, as we find by his penitential psalms; which inform us, that his sin was always before him; that he washed every night his couch with his tears; that he laboured in his groans; that he mingled ashes with his bread, and tears with his drink, &c. O let us imitate this glorious penitent!

Conclude, if thou wouldest be a true friend to thy own soul, not to be afraid of hurting this sinful flesh, which is thy greatest enemy: but to keep it in subjection, by voluntary mortifications, and to chastise it for its past misdemeanors by penitential austeries.

FEB. 9. *On the manner of doing penance for our sins.*

CONSIDER first, that the true manner of doing penance for our sins, is not to be learnt from the maxims, or from the common practice of the children of this world; who fear nothing more than the hurting themselves, or the contradicting their own humours, appetites, and inclinations; and therefore this *bringing forth fruits worthy of penance*, is to them a hard saying, which they cannot endure to hear. But the true manner of doing penance for sin, is to be learnt of the children of light, that is, from the doctrine, and practice

of the Saints: who as they had quite other ideas of the evil of sin, than worldlings have; so also they had a very different way of thinking, and of acting, in regard to penance; as they have demonstrated by the penitential austerities, to which they have condemned themselves, all their life-time, for expiation of the punishment due to their sins. And what are so many religious orders, in the church of God, in which so many thousands of both sexes, retiring from the world, dedicate themselves to daily mortifications and penances, but as many standing memorials, and living instances, of that true manner of doing penance, which the spirit of God usually inspires to those whom he *convinces of sin*, that is to say, whom he makes sensible of the heinousness of the evil of sin, and how much ought to be done for the expiation of it.

Consider 2dly, how this same spirit of God dictated to the ancient church those rules and ordinances, commonly called the *penitential canons*, which were in force for many hundred years, by which penitent sinners were subject to divers fasts and other humiliations, for three, seven, ten, and sometimes for fifteen years, or more, for one mortal sin, and yet did not think they did too much. O how ought this to convince sinners, that there is something more to be done for the remission of their sins, than they have hitherto been aware of! For though, according to the modern discipline of the church, these *penitential canons* are not now enforced: yet as God is still the same, and sin is still as heinous in his eyes, as it was in former ages; so the sinner stands no less indebted at present to the divine justice than formerly, and therefore ought to think upon discharging this debt, in the best manner he is able, by frequent fasting and other corporal mortifications, as well as by alms-deeds, and long continued prayer.

Consider 3dly, that there are three particular practices of penance, which ought never to be forgotten, by any such as have, at any time in life, been guilty of mortal sin. The first and principal is, that they should ~~go~~ daily in spirit to the feet of Christ, to wash them with

with penitential tears, flowing from a loving heart; and there earnestly beg pardon for all their past offences, through his precious blood. The second, which will naturally flow from the first, is, that having their sins thus always before their eyes, they should daily offer up to God, in penance for them, some voluntary mortifications of their own will, humour, or appetite; at least, in lesser things, if they have not the courage or strength to undertake greater. For instance, that they should, in this spirit, rise early in the morning; retrench superfluities in eating, drinking, sleeping and diversions, and mortify, upon every occasion, their vanity, curiosity and sensuality. The third is, that they should also offer up daily for their sins, in a penitential spirit, all the labours, to which their state of life is exposed, with all their pains, and sufferings of every kind, which they may have to endure in life or death; to be united to, and sanctified by, the labours and sufferings of the Son of God, considering themselves all the while as under a course of penance laid on them by the Almighty for their sins; and going through it, with humility, patience, and courage. Whosoever shall diligently persevere in the practice of these three things, will be allowed of one day as true penitents; and receive the crown of true penitents; though their circumstances of life, strength, or health, may not have admitted of any other penitential austeries. But no condition of life, or other circumstances whatsoever, ought to dispense with any sinner, from these three most easy, and most wholesome exercises of penance.

Conclude upon doing penance for thy sins, in the best manner thou art able, now whilst thou hast time before thee; lest otherwise thou be surprized and overtaken with the night, and mayest then wish in vain to have done penance, when time shall be no more.

FEB. 10. *On the parable of the sower.* Luke viii. *Being
the gospel of Sexagesima Sunday.*

CONSIDER first, in this parable, the infinite riches of the goodness and bounty of the Son of God, who, without distinction, or respect of persons, sows so plentifully the seed of his word, and of his graces, on all kind of soils. This seed is heavenly: it is capable of producing fruit a hundred fold: he himself is the sower; and he himself waters with rain from heaven the seed he has sown: and yet three parts in four of this divine seed are lost, for want of a correspondence in the soil. Christians, see in what manner you receive the seed of God's word: see how you correspond with the divine graces and calls: your eternal salvation is here at stake. If you bring forth good fruit, agreeable to this divine seed; you shall live on it for endless ages, in the kingdom of heaven: But if you suffer the soil of your soul to be like a beaten highway; or like a rock, covered but with a thin surface of earth; or like a ground over-run with thorns and briars; the seed of God will be lost upon you; and you will be answerable for the loss of it; and miserable for all eternity.

Consider 2dly, what is here meant by the *highway*; where the seed is trodden under foot, or pickt up by the birds; and see how justly all such souls are compared to a *highway*, or a beaten path, as live in the forgetfulness of God, and in a continual dissipation of thought; so as to become a mere thorough-fare for every passenger that pleases; that is, for every idle amusement, that offers itself; for every impertinent or sinful imagination; without any fence at all of the fear of God, or any care to keep off those wicked spirits, signified by the birds, which are ever upon the watch to catch away this divine seed of God's word, that lies thus unregarded on the surface of the soul. But what is the remedy for this evil? No other, to be sure, than to plough up this ground, that has hitherto been made a highway; to fence it in, in such a manner as that the passengers

passengers may have no longer liberty to be continually trampling it under foot; and to harrow it so that the seed may be covered by the earth, and lie no longer exposed to be a prey to the birds. For a highway, or beaten path, as long as it remains such, can never bring forth fruit. Now in the spiritual sense, we plough up the soil of the soul, by daily meditations upon eternal truths; we fence it in, by a spirit of recollection; and we preserve the divine seed, which is to make it fruitful, from our spiritual enemies, by letting it sink deep into our souls; and there guarding it, by watching and prayer.

Consider 3dly, who they are that are meant by the *rock*, or *stony ground*, where there is no depth of earth, nor proper moisture to nourish the seed, so as to bring the fruit to maturity: *viz.* such souls as receive indeed the word of God; and are moved by it, to make some good resolutions, and some slender efforts towards bringing forth the fruits of a new life; but the *rock* of their old bad habits, (which they have never heartily renounced) hinders the seed from taking root: their resolutions are but superficial, they do not sink in deep enough to reach, or change the heart, but, upon the first opposition or temptation they wither away and die. The remedy here must be to procure that this rock may be softened, by the means of a long continued application to mental prayer, and other spiritual exercises; till those old habits are brought to give way to the fear and love of God; which are capable even of breaking the rock in pieces, and of changing it into springs of water.

Conclude to be ever attentive to the gracious calls of the word of God, and of his heavenly inspirations: and to let this divine seed sink deep into thy soul by daily meditation.

FEB. 11. *On the remaining part of the parable of the sower.*

CONSIDER first, that there remains a third kind of soil, which brings no fruit to maturity: *viz.* the *thorny ground*; which receives indeed the seed of the

divine word ; but suffers it not to grow up, and to ripen, but over-powers it, and chokes it up with the thorns, which are its natural produce, and which have taken a much stronger root therein. By which thorny ground are meant all they, who hear the word of God, or are otherwise favoured with the visits of his graces and calls; but are so unhappy as to suffer all this heavenly seed to be over-powered, and choaked up with their carnal affections and lusts; or, as our Saviour says, *with the cares. and riches, and pleasures of this life; and so yield no fruit.* Luke viii. 14. O see, my soul, if this be not thy misfortune. Reflect how often thou hast been visited with graces from heaven? How often thou hast heard, or read the word of God? And what fruit has this divine seed hitherto produced in thee? It is well if, instead of the increase of a hundred fold, it has not been rendered absolutely fruitless, if not pernicious to thee, by the thorns of thy disorderly affections to the things of this world, which thou hast loved more than God.

Consider 2dly, that *thorny ground* can never bring any fruit to perfection, except the thorns be first rooted up : for since they are much stronger than the corn, and have taken a deeper root in this unhappy soil, (in consequence of the curse laid upon our earth by occasion of sin, Gen. iii. 17. 18.) as long as they are suffered to occupy the ground, they will of course over-power, and choke up the good grain. Wherefore, if we desire to bring forth fruit, and that the seed of the word, and of the grace of God, should not be lost upon us, we must seriously apply our souls to the rooting out these thorns of our irregular affections to worldly toys, and sensual pleasures; for as long as these are predominant in our souls, the seed of heaven will bring forth no fruit there. Now this rooting out of these thorns is the proper business of the virtue of self-denial, that is, of the daily mortification of our passions and natural inclinations, which are ever prone to evil: and, if not kept under, hurry the soul into all kind of vice, and stifle all the graces and inspirations of heaven. This then must be the care of every Christian, this our daily labour, to keep

keep these thorns under, that they may not over-power the seed of the word, and of the grace of God in our souls, as mortal enemies to the seed of heaven, and to our true welfare, either for time or eternity.

Consider 3dly, that the Christian must endeavour to be the good ground, in which the seed of God's word yieldeth fruit an hundred-fold: that is, he must labour to be of the number of those, *who with a good and perfect heart hear the word, and keep it, and bring forth fruit in patience.* He must hear it with a *good heart*; not out of idle curiosity, but for his own instruction and edification; not to carp at it, or criticise upon it; but to let it sink into his soul, for the reformation of his life. He must hear it with a *perfect heart*, embracing it as the word, and truth of God, brought to him from heaven by the Son of God, and designed to carry him to heaven. He must *keep it*, by laying it up carefully in his mind; and often meditating upon it: he must ever follow its light, and regulate all his steps by it. He must *bring forth fruit*, with it: by exercising himself daily in those virtues which it recommends, and advancing continually, by its direction, in the love of God, and in the way of Christian perfection; And this fruit he must bring forth *in patience*; that is with constancy and perseverance, notwithstanding all the difficulties and oppositions, he will be sure to meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Conclude to rid thy soul of all the thorns that may hinder it from bringing forth fruit to God; that thou mayest be the good ground that may yield a hundred fold.

FEB, 12. Against delay of repentance.

CONSIDER first, that of all the tricks of Satan, by which he deludes unhappy souls, to their eternal ruin, there is none more common, or more dangerous, than this by which he persuades them to put off their repentance and their conversion to God from time to time, till there is no more time for them. Alas! thousands and millions of poor souls have been thus betrayed,

trayed, into that bottomless pit, of never ending wo, where the worm never dies, and the fire is never extinguished; who thought as little of damning themselves, or of dying in their sins, as any one now living: but by putting off their conversion, they have gone on provoking the divine justice, till by a just judgment of God, they have been cut off, when they least expected it; and dying as they lived, have been justly sentenced to that second and everlasting death. Unhappy wretches, who would not believe the just judge, who has so often warned them to watch; and assured them that otherwise he should surprise them, like a thief in the night, when they least expected him. Ah! how dreadful and how common are these judgments!

Consider 2dly, the insupportable affront, that sinners offer to the divine majesty, when being invited and pressed by his heavenly graces to a reconciliation with their offended God, they put him off till another time; shutting their ears to his sweet calls; and refusing him the entrance of their hearts, where he stands and knocks. Alas! If he withdraws himself, they are undone for ever: and how dare they treat him with so much contempt? Is it not an infinite goodness in him, to have already suffered them so long in their sins, to have restrained the sword of his justice from falling upon their guilty heads; to have kept them so long out of hell, hanging as they were all the while over this bottomless pit, and supported only by a slender thread of a brittle life, which he held in his hand? Is it not an inexpressible condescension in his divine majesty, after their repeated treasons, to allow them any conditions of peace and reconciliation at all? How much more to call after them, when they are running away from him; and to press them so earnestly to return to him; whereas he has no need at all of them; but only seeks their welfare? But what then ought they not to apprehend from his justice, if they still refuse his offers of mercy; and slight his graces and calls? Can any punishment be too great for so much insolence, for so much obstinacy, and for so much ingratitude? O! let them give ear to his threats by

by the mouth of the wise man. Prov. i. *Because I have called, and you have refused to hear. I have stretched out my hand, and you would not regard me. You have despised all my counsels, and neglected my reprobations. Therefore will I also laugh at your destruction, and will mock, when that which you feared shall come upon you. Then shall they call upon me, and I will not hear, &c.*

Consider 3dly the monstrous presumption the sinner is guilty of, in wilfully persisting in sin, upon the confidence of a future conversion. Wretch that he is, how dares he pretend to dispose of the time to come, when he is not master of one moment of it? Or how has he the assurance to promise himself greater graces hereafter, than those he abuses at present. Does he not know that God alone is the master both of time and grace? And that he has neither promised the time nor grace of a true conversion hereafter, to any one of those who put off their repentance at the present? So far from it, that he has often signified to such presumptuous sinners, that they shall neither have the time, nor the effectual grace which they promise themselves; but that they shall be surprised, and die in their sins. According to that of the wise man, Ecclesiasticus v. 8, 2. *Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day: for his wrath will come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee.*

Conclude never to expose thy dear soul, by any delays, to the dreadful danger of dying in thy sins: but if at any time thou hast reason to apprehend thou hast lost the grace of God, by sin; use thy best endeavours to be reconciled out of hand. It is a dreadful thing to be an enemy of God, though it were to be only for one night. That night may be thy last: therefore never venture to lie down to sleep, under the guilt of mortal sin.

FEB. 13. *On the folly of deferring our conversion to God.*

CONSIDER first, how foolish it is for the sinner, when called, when invited, and pressed, by the best of Fathers, to return to him; to choose rather to continue a slave to Satan, for to feed his swine; and to prefer the husks of swine, which can never satisfy him, before his Father's table, and the happy liberty of the children of God. Ah! poor wretch, open thy eyes, and see how strangely thou art deluded? Thy God proffers thee his mercy, his grace, his favour, the honour of being his child, his spouse, his temple, a share in his heavenly treasures; his peace, his comforts, his table, his kingdom, his Holy Spirit, in a word, himself, and all that is good: And thou art so blind, and so mad, as to desire him to keep all his favours for another time: and to make choice for thyself at present of the extremity of all misery; by choosing to go on yet a while under the dreadful guilt of mortal sin, a wretched slave to Satan, sin and hell. Can any madness be comparable to this?

Consider also, how vain and foolish are those pretexts, by which sinners suffer themselves to be imposed upon, when they defer their conversion to God: especially with regard to pretended difficulties in the undertaking, which would all presently be put to flight, and vanish away, if they would but once heartily set their hand to the work. But what is the most common delusion, is that they vainly imagine, they shall do it more easily another time. A dreadful delusion indeed! since both reason and daily experience must make it evident, that the longer this work is deferred, the harder it is to bring it about. And how should it be otherwise; since by these delays, and by continuing to add sin to sin, their sinful habits grow daily stronger upon them, and consequently harder to be rooted out; the devil's power over them daily increases; and God Almighty, provoked by their repeated abuses of his graces, and their obstinate impenitence, withdraws himself further and further from them; and suffers them by degrees

grees to fall into that blindness and hardness of heart, which of all evils is the most difficult to be cured.

Consider 3dly, the folly of all such as put off their conversion to God, through the apprehension of the confession of their sins; and choose to suffer for a long time the gnawing worm of a guilty conscience, with all the other evils that always attend on mortal sin; and to be continually exposed to the danger of death and hell, and to all the judgments of an offended God; rather than to undergo a small confusion, that would last but one moment, and would immediately be followed with unspeakable comfort, and with a speedy pardon, reconciliation, peace, and grace. Would not all the world condemn that person of the greatest folly and madnes, who labouring under a most painful, and mortal distemper, should refuse an easy, safe and sovereign remedy, only because it was disagreeable to the palate, just for the moment of the taking it? But O how much more unaccountable is the folly and madnes of the sinner, who for fear of so small an humiliation, as the confession of his sins, to a minister of God, tied by the laws, both of God and man, to an eternal secrecy, refuses all the medicines of heaven, under a mortal disease, which is hurrying him on towards an eternal death; and chooses rather to risk his all, for eternity, than to discover his illnes to his physician?

Conclude not to suffer the enemy to impose upon thee, with any of his deceitful wiles; so as to induce thee to continue playing upon the brink of a precipice, with the sword of God hanging over thy head. No prudent person would refuse to be immediately reconciled to a man whom he had offended, who had the power and authority, to condemn him to a cruel death, for his offence: how much les should the sinner put off his reconciliation with an offended God, who can in an instant cast both his body and soul into hell; and who is highly provoked by his impenitence,

FEB. 14. *On death-bed performances.*

CONSIDER first, that if it be so great an evil, to defer, for any considerable time, our conversion to God, and our reconciliation with him; it must be an evil incomparably greater, to form a pre-meditated design of putting it off, to the end of our life, upon the confidence of a death-bed repentance: because the risk, the presumption, the madness, the outrage offered to God in this case is incomparably greater: So that it is well, if one in a thousand of them, that are guilty of such a formal design of putting a cheat upon the divine justice, (by indulging themselves in sin all their life-time, and then only thinking to make their peace with God, when they can sin no longer) ever meet with even the poor chance of a death-bed confession; much less with the grace of an effectual conversion. Oh! No: such sinners will find to their loss that *God is not to be mocked:* Gal. vi. 7. The general rule is, that *what a man soweth the same shall he reap:* and that as a man lives, so shall he die. A rule so general, that in the whole scripture we have but one instance of a happy death after a wicked life, viz. that of the good thief: an example so singular in all its circumstances, as to afford no kind of encouragement to such sinners, as design before-hand, to give the slip to God's justice, by a death-bed conversion.

Consider 2dly, how very little it is, that the sinner is capable of doing on his death-bed, towards his conversion; when either the dulness and stupidity, caused by his sickness, or by the quality of the medicines; or the pains and agonies, which he endures in body or in mind, render him quite unfit for prayer, and incapable of attention to reading; or of any serious application of his thoughts to the great business of his soul. Alas! if a little head-ach, or any other slight indisposition, be enough to hinder us at any time from making any serious meditation, or praying with devotion, how much less shall we be able to attend to prayer, or to do anything else to the purpose, when we shall be surprised with

with a mortal illness, and with the pangs of death? O Christians, let not yourselves then be imposed upon with vain imaginations of the fine acts of contrition, and of the love of God, that you will make upon your death-bed: they will all fly away from you then: it is well if you shall then be capable even of one good thought. Thousands that have flattered themselves with the thoughts of doing fine things upon their death-bed, have been prevented by sudden death; thousands have been taken out of their senses, before they apprehended their danger; thousands have been flattered by those about them into a conceit that they were not dying, when they really were; and which is the most common of all, thousands, in punishment of their forgetting God in their life-time, have been suffered to forget themselves in death: and thus generally speaking these fine projects of death-bed performances turn to smoke, and end in hell.

Consider 3dly, that the conversion of an habitual sinner is at any time a very difficult task; and requires a strong grace; such as may reach and change the heart, and effectually turn it from the affection of sin to the love of God: so as to make it hate above all evils, what has been for a long time turned into a second nature, by the force of an evil habit; and to love and embrace with the whole soul what has hitherto been loathed, or despised. But if this task be very difficult at all times; and seldom brought to effect, without long and serious meditations, and much prayer: what a poor chance must there be for such sinners, as have on set purpose put off this work to the time, in which they are neither capable of meditation nor prayer; and which is worst of all, when in punishment of their obstinate impenitence, and insupportable presumption, God has withdrawn himself from them? Alas poor sinner, thou flatteredst thyself in thy sins, that it would be easy for thee at any time (how late soever) to make thy peace with God, and to escape hell; because thou hadst heard, that in whatsoever hour the sinner shall turn to God, he will shew him mercy: but then the devil hid from thy eyes, that this effectual turning to God, especially upon a

death-bed, must be the fruit of an extraordinary grace of God, which he has promised to no man; yea a very great miracle of grace, which he is seldom disposed to work in favour of such presumptuous wretches, as have made a practice all their life-time of mocking him.

Conclude to have no dependence upon the death-bed performances of habitual sinners: no, not even though, like Antiochus, they should shed tears plentifully: these are often influenced by the fear of death, more than the love of God. Take thou care of one at least, by living always, for thy own part, as thou desirest to die: and exhort all that belong to thee, to secure their souls, by this same method; it is the only safe way.

FEB. 15. *On the dispositions with which we are to enter upon the service of God.* From Ecclii ii.

CONSIDER first, and diligently attend to those words of the wise man, *Ecclii*, ii. 1. *Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice, and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation:* and learn from these prescriptions of the Holy Ghost to enter upon the service of God, with a strong resolution of not being disengaged with the opposition thou shalt meet with from the world, the flesh, and the devil; and with a determination to stand thy ground in this spiritual warfare, like a valiant soldier; putting on the armour of Christian justice, and of the fear of God: according to that of the Apostle, *Eph. vi. 13, &c.* *Take unto you the armour of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect.* Stand therefore having your loins girt about with truth (that is, with sincerity in your intention towards God) and having on the breast-plate of justice (that is, of Christian virtue, with a full determination, at all events, to be true to your God) in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one; (by a lively sense of God and eternity) and take unto you the helmet of salvation, (that is, an humble confidence in God;) and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God; viz. by frequent hearing, reading, or meditating

on divine truths. And being thus prepared for the fight, you will not fail of gaining the victory.

Consider 2dly, what the wise man further prescribes to all that desire to succeed in this glorious enterprize; which is to bring us to God, and to eternal life. *Humble thy heart, says he, and endure;* (that is, suppress, and keep under, all the irregular risings of thy pride and passion, that shall offer to oppose thy undertaking:) *wait on God with patience, join thyself to God and endure, that thy life may be increased in the latter end.* *Take all that shall be brought upon thee; and in thy sorrow endure, and in thy humiliation keep patience.* For gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation. Excellent lessons, not only for beginners, but for all that are on their journey towards heaven! for crosses, sufferings, and humiliations are the portion of all the servants of God; and patience and courage in adversities, humbling ourselves under the hand of God, and a perfect resignation to his holy will, serve to qualify all our afflictions, and to make them light and easy, as well as infinitely advantageous to our souls. O how happy are they who have learnt what it is to join themselves to God, in all they have to suffer! O what a happiness is to be found in enduring in his company, and with an entire conformity to his blessed will! What an increase will this give to our life in the latter end; by adding to it a happy eternity!

Consider 3dly, that one of the most excellent dispositions for attaining to all good, and the most effectual means to begin well, to advance daily, and to continue to the end in the happy service of God, is to conceive, and to nourish in the soul, a great esteem for a virtuous and devout life, an earnest desire of being good, a hunger and thirst after Christian justice; in a word, an ardent love for true wisdom, which indeed is no other than the knowledge, love, and service of God. *I wished,* says the wise man, *Wisdom vii. 7. and understanding was given me, and I called, and the spirit of wisdom came upon me: and I preferred her before kingdoms and thrones, and esteemed riches nothing in comparison with her....I loved her*

her above health and beauty, and all good things came to me together with her, and innumerable riches through her hands.—For she is an infinite treasure to men, which they that use become the friends of God. O how glorious are the things that are said, both here, and in many other passages of the divine oracles, of this heavenly wisdom! O how lovely, how desirable, is this treasure, this precious pearl of virtue and devotion, which is the truest wisdom! Who would not give all things else to purchase such an inestimable jewel? But behold the wisest of men, yea the Spirit of God by him, assures us, that we need but desire it, seek it, and love it, with all our hearts, and it shall be our own.

Conclude to observe all these heavenly lessons; and they will not fail to bring thee to God. He earnestly desires to make thee happy, by making thee his true servant; if thou desirest the same, how canst thou miscarry; provided thy desire be fervent and perseverant?

Fig. 16. On true devotion.

CONSIDER first, that a *devout life* is indeed the most happy of lives, and the most secure way to an eternal life. For *true devotion* is the very perfection of charity and love; she is the queen of virtues. But beware, O my soul, of the error of such *false devotees*, as make all devotion consist in certain external exercises, destitute of the internal spirit; or in huddling over a number of prayers, or in frequent fastings, disciplines, or hair shirts; or in giving alms; or in frequenting the sacraments; or in following some other religious practices, which happen to be agreeable to their inclinations; though they remain all the while unmortified in their passions, full of self-love, and void of all true charity, either to God, or to their neighbours: whereas true devotion cannot be without keeping all the commandments, but more especially those two, of loving God above all things, and our neighbours as ourselves.

Consider

Consider 2dly, that to be *truly devout*, is to give one's-self truly to God, according to the original meaning of the word *devotion*, which signifies a dedication and consecration of one's-self to God. So that true devotion consists in always seeking God, and tending to him, in embracing in all things his holy will, and ever loving and obeying his holy law. He that does this, is truly devout: but he that does not love the will of God, better than his own humour, is not devout, although he prays all day long, and sheds floods of tears. Consequently, he that is a slave to any of his passions, he that entertains a rancour to any one of his neighbours, he that sets his heart upon the world, and its toys, more than God, can never be truly devout, because he wants the very foundation of true devotion, which is loving God above all things. As to those other things mentioned above, they are often the attendants of true devotion, or its effects; but then devotion does not consist in any of them; and they may often be found in such as have no true devotion, no true charity, nor even true faith; *without which no one can please God*, Heb. xi.

Consider 3dly, that true devotion is not always sensible, nor does it consist in certain sensible tenderesses, which some people experience in prayer; whilst others, who perhaps in the sight of God are much better Christians, meet with nothing for a long time but dryness and desolation. Some persons are of a more soft and tender nature, and are easily affected even unto tears; and yet withal are very superficial in the love of God; quickly forget their good resolutions of serving him; easily yield in the time of temptation; shrink under every cross; and never arrive at solid virtue; and where is their *devotion* all this while, since it dries up, like their tears, in a moment, and brings forth no fruit? How much more *devout* is that Christian, who continues constant in prayer, though he finds no sensible comfort therein; who goes not to prayer to seek his own pleasure, but to please his God, and to glorify him; who is willing to take up the cross, and to help his Saviour

in the carriage of his cross, by bearing, for the love of him, the drynes and desolation that he endures; without leaving his accustomed exercises: in a word, whose prayer is a conformity of his own will to the will of God. O this is devotion indeed: but sensible consolations, without this conformity, deserve not the name of devotion.

Conclude to make no account of any feeling of devotion, that is not accompanied with charity, humility, and conformity to the will of God; and thou wilt be sure not to be imposed upon, as great numbers have been, by false appearances, and phantoms of devotion, to the danger of the loss of their precious souls,

FEB. 17, *On the opposition there is between the world and the Gospel. For Shrove-Tide.*

CONSIDER first, that it is not for nothing that the Son of God in the *Gospel*, so often declares against the *world*, as a capital enemy of him and his: because light and darkness are not more opposite than the *world* and the *Gospel*. The maxims and practices of the one are quite contradictory to the other. The *world* perpetually recommends what the *Gospel* condemns, and condemns what the *Gospel* recommends. The *world* is made up of pride, ambition, and vain-glory; the *Gospel* breathes nothing but humility, self-contempt, choosing the lowest place, and becoming as little children: assuring us that otherwise there is no heaven for us. The *world* inspires a covetous spirit, the love of mammon, and a fondness for worldly toys: the *Gospel* inculcates the necessity of despising all these things, and of quitting all things, at least in affection, to follow Christ. The *world* is a slave to sensual pleasures, and places its whole happiness in gratifying and indulging its own humours and inclinations: the *Gospel* requires, as the very first and most necessary condition to be a disciple of Christ, that we should deny ourselves, hate our own humours and inclinations, and take up our cross, and follow him. The *world* imagines them blessed, that abound the most with worldly honours, riches, delicacies,

delicacies, pastimes, and other worldly enjoyments, and have no one to thwart or contradict them. The Gospel, on the contrary, pronounces them blessed that are poor in this world, that suffer injuries and affronts with meekness, that weep and mourn, and that are reviled and persecuted by men. In a word, the life of worldlings is a perpetual contradiction to the Gospel of Christ. And the life of Christ, and of all the true children of the Gospel, is a perpetual censure of the world, and its maxims. See, my soul, which thou hadst rather follow, the world or the Gospel; the broad way, or the narrow; the way of perdition, or the way of life.

Consider 2dly, that Christianity never had a more dangerous enemy than the world; and never yet suffered half so much from all the persecutions of infidels, that have been from the beginning, as it continually suffers from these false brethren, who, under the Christian name, are perpetually undermining the Gospel of Christ, and promoting the kingdom of Satan. The persecutions of infidels made innumerable Saints, and served very much to purify, and to propagate, the church and kingdom of Christ: whereas, this war that is continually carried on by wicked Christians, against the morals and maxims of the Gospel, draws away innumerable souls from Christ, corrupts the innocence even of the best inclined, enslaves them to Satan and sin, and condemns them to hell. O let us beware of this mortal enemy of our salvation, this torrent of worldly custom, these pernicious maxims of a deluded and deluding world.

Consider 3dly, with relation to this very time of *Shrovetide*, how wide a distance there is between the true spirit of Christianity, and the practice of the children of this world. The church sets aside this time for a time of devotion and penance, that it may be a suitable preparation for the solemn fast of Lent; therefore she puts on at this time her penitential attire; she calls upon her children to enter into a penitential disposition; to renounce now their evil ways, and to confess their sins; that, by removing these rubs out of the way, they

they may be properly prepared for meeting with mercy and grace, at this approaching time of mercy and grace. The very name of *Shrove-tide*, in the ancient English, signifies *the time of confession of sins*, because our catholic ancestors were taught to turn to God, at this time, with their whole hearts, by humble confession and penance. But O how sadly has the spirit of the world perverted this pious institution, and turned this time of devotion and penance into a time of riot and sin; even of such excesses and extravagancies, as would much better suit with the heathenish festivals of Bacchus, than with any Christian solemnity; much less with a preparation for a penitential fast. Beware thou, my soul, of conforming thyself to the world, in any of its extravagancies at this time, lest by joining now with this enemy of God, and of thy salvation, thou come to lose both thyself, and thy God, for all eternity,

Conclude to give ear to the divine oracles. *Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world.* If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him, 1 John ii. 15. *The friendship of this world is the enemy of God:* Whosoever therefore will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God, James iv. 4. And since the word of God thus expressly declares, that there can be no such thing as being a friend both to God and the world, keep off from the love of the world, and from its maxims and customs, lest thou make God thy enemy.

FEB. 18. *On fighting under the standard of Jesus Christ.*

CONSIDER first, that there are upon earth, and have been all along, two opposite kingdoms, two opposite interests, two opposite cities, Jerusalem and Babylon, the city of God, and the city of the devil; two opposite standards, that of Jesus Christ, and that of Satan. From the time that man unhappily fell from God by sin, Satan set up his tyrannical usurpation; which he has, by all kind of tricks and lies, endeavoured to maintain ever since; by alluring poor deluded mortals with the glittering shew of worldly pomps, riches,

and

and pleasures, to become his slaves, and to fight under his standard; and by establishing amongst them his laws and maxims, calculated for nothing else but to make them miserable both for time and eternity. And ah! how unhappily has he prevailed over millions! What multitudes every where join with him against their God! How is this wretched Babylon spread over all the earth!

Consider 2dly, that Jesus Christ came into this world, to set up his standard, in opposition to the standard of Satan, and to invite all men to follow him; promising to deliver his followers from all their evils, and to impart to them all his good. They that duly correspond with his call, and join his royal standard, make up the city of God, the blessed Jerufalem, the church of the Saints. But see now the immense difference between these two opposite cities and their inhabitants; how happy the one, and how miserable the other. The children of Babylon are miserable indeed; they are slaves to passions that can never be satisfied; to a world that can never be contented; to infernal tyrants, that are continually dragging them along with them towards hell: they are slaves to empty vanities, childish toys, and lying follies; labouring under a variety of fears, cares, sorrows, uneasinesses, and innumerable other evils, without enjoying so much as any one solid or lasting satisfaction. But O how happy are the children of Jerufalem! What content, what peace, what pure pleasure in the soul, are commonly their portion, even in this life; and immortal joys in the next! And shalt thou, my soul, stand one moment to deliberate, which of the two thou wilt choose; the standard of Christ, or that of Satan; Jerufalem or Babylon; all good, or all evil; verity or vanity; happiness or misery; heaven or hell?

Consider 3dly, that all manner of motives, from time and eternity, from our origin and last end, from duty and interest, honour and pleasure, fear and love, all here concur to determine the soul in her choice, and to fix her in the happy resolution of following the standard of Jesus Christ. Turn then, my soul, turn away from this

Babel

Babel of confusion, noise, and disorder: break her chains from off thy neck, O captive daughter of Sion. Renounce, for good and all, the king of pride; the tyrant that has usurped to himself the dominion over this world, and its deluded admirers: renounce his works and pomps, together with all his associates, the princes of darknes, and all their slaves: and turn thyself to the blessed Jerusalem, the city of peace: embrace the king of peace, and his glorious standard, with all thy heart; choose him for thy king for ever; pay him irrevocable homage; and promise him inviolable fidelity and obedience.

Conclude, since thou hast now chosen Jesus Christ to be thy king, to fight manfully unto death, under his royal standard of the cross, against his and thy enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. In order to this, learn well thy exercise of prayer, and the rules of the gospel, which are the military discipline, which he has fixed for his soldiers.

FEB. 19. On the rules prescribed by Jesus Christ to his followers.

CONSIDER first, the laws of the military discipline which Jesus Christ prescribes to all that desire to be his soldiers, Mat. xvi. 24. *If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* The observance of these three articles makes a compleat soldier of Christ. We must renounce ourselves; we must bear our crosses; and we must walk in the foot-steps of Jesus Christ. The corruption of man by sin; the wounds that sin has left in all the faculties of the soul; the violence of our disorderly passions; and the bent of our natural inclinations to evil, infer a necessity of renouncing ourselves, of fighting against ourselves, and of hating our natural inclinations, if we hope to be happy either here or hereafter. We have not a more dangerous enemy than ourselves; the devil himself cannot hurt us half so much as we hurt ourselves, when we follow our own will, and indulge our own inclinations. *The denying, therefore, of ourselves, is the first article of the discipline of Jesus Christ, in opposition*

tion to our unhappy self-love, the root of all our evils, and its three principal branches, *the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.* The Son of God came down from heaven, to engage us in this holy warfare. The humility, the poverty, the voluntary sufferings of his birth, of his life, and of his death, were all levelled against these enemies.

Consider 2dly, that the soldier of Jesus Christ must stand to his colours; he must not run from the cross. He must bear and forbear; he must endure many conflicts; he must patiently submit to, and courageously go through, the labours and hardships of this short campaign of his mortal life. He must not pretend to fare better than his captain and his king. All sufferings and hardships appear as nothing to a brave soldier, when he is following his prince, and is happy in his Company. The Christian soldier then must be willing to carry his cross after Jesus Christ, who opened heaven to us by the cross, and conducts his soldiers thither by the way of the cross. Embrace then, O my soul, this happy instrument of thy salvation, in which, if thou bearest it in a proper manner, thou wilt find an inexhaustible source of grace and comfort. Embrace the holy will of God, which lays the cross upon thee, to bring thee to himself. He knows what is best for thee, because he is infinitely wise, and he sends thee what he knows is for the best, because he is infinitely good, and good to thee. Thou canst not be in a safer or better way than in the way of the cross, by which Jesus Christ and all his Saints have gone to heaven. Even in this life, the true soldiers of Christ find often a greater sweetness in the cross, than in all the pleasures of this world.

Consider 3dly, that the soldiers of Christ are all called, even as his first disciples were, to *follow him;* that is, to walk in his foot-steps, by an imitation of his life. He came down from heaven to be our teacher, and our model; and it is the great duty of all that desire to belong to him, to copy after this blessed original, and to shew forth in themselves the life of Jesus Christ; *To learn of him to be meek and humble of heart; to learn*

of him poverty of spirit, a contempt of the honours, riches, and pleasures of this world, and a disengagement of the heart from all earthly things: to learn of him a horror for sin, and an obedience even unto death: in fine, to learn of him, a perpetual conformity to the will of God, and an unbounded charity to every neighbour. Such was the life of Jesus Christ, and such ought to be the life of all his soldiers.

Conclude to embrace henceforward this discipline of Jesus Christ, in all its parts. It is a *heavenly* discipline indeed; since he came down from *heaven* to teach it; and the observance of it is to bring us to *heaven*.

N. B. That as Lent sometimes begins before the twentieth of February, sometimes after; when it begins before, the meditations that are not read at this time are to be read in June, after the octave of *Corpus Christi*: as on the other hand, when Lent begins later than the twentieth of February, the meditations that shall be wanting here, are to be taken out of the number of those that are placed in the month of June after the aforesaid octave.

Here follow meditations for the feasts of St. Matthias, St. Joseph, and the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, which commonly fall in Lent.

FEB 24. *On the gospel of the feast of St. Matthias.*

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, *rejoicing in the Holy Ghost*, Matt. xi. 25, &c. addressed himself to his heavenly Father in these words: *I give thanks to thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things (the great truths of the Gospel) from the wise and prudent (of this world) and hast revealed them to little ones.* And learn thou, my soul, to admire and adore in this the wonderful ways of the wisdom of God, who ever resists the proud, and gives his grace to the humble; and therefore withdraws and hides himself, and his truths, from such as are puffed up with the conceit

ceit of their own wit or learning, or any other talents, whether natural or acquired; whilst he discovers his secrets to the little and humble; fills their souls with his heavenly light, and works his greatest wonders in them, and by them. Thus he did with regard to his Apostles: and thus we shall generally find, that the humble and simple have been instruments in the hand of God, of all the great works he has wrought in the conversion and sanctification of souls. O blessed be his name for ever, who thus delights in shewing his power in weak vessels; and chooses the contemptible things of this world, to confound our pride! O teach me, dear Lord, to be ever little and humble.

Consider 2dly, how sweetly our Lord, on the same occasion, invites us to himself; saying, *Come to me all you that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will refresh you.* Alas! we all labour in this vale of tears: 'The days of this world are short and evil, full of sorrows and miseries; where man is defiled with many sins, ensnared with many passions, assaulted with many fears, disquieted with many cares, dissipated with many curiosities, entangled with many vanities, surrounded with many errors, broken with many hardships and fatigues, troubled with many temptations.' *Kempis.* And is not this *labouring and being heavy laden?* Yes, there is a *heavy yoke, indeed, upon the children of Adam, from their coming out of their mother's womb, until the day of their burial into the mother of all,* *Ecclesiasticus. xl. 1.* But what remedy then for all these evils? We must run to Christ, and *he will refresh us;* he will comfort, and relieve us: *We must take his yoke upon us, and he will rescue us from the slavery of sin and Satan; he will qualify all our other labours and miseries; he will give us the victory over all our passions and temptations; and we shall find rest to our souls. For his yoke is sweet, and his burthen light.*

Consider 3dly, that our Lord here invites us also to *learn of him, to take him for our master, and to become his scholars.* A great honour indeed, to have the Son of God come down from heaven to be our teacher!

But what then are we to learn of so great a master? Are we to learn of him to make heaven and earth; or to rule and govern the whole universe? Or are we to learn of him to work all kind of miracles, and to raise the dead to life? O no: but we are to learn of him, to be *meek and humble of heart*. This is the great lesson the king of heaven came down to teach us. In learning this, we shall find a remedy for all our evils. No one but he could effectually teach us this lesson. Could we even raise the dead to life, it would be all nothing, without *learning to be meek and humble of heart*, and overcoming passion and pride.

Conclude, O my soul, to comply henceforward with this sweet summons and invitation of thy dear Lord, and to run to him, and put thyself in his service: that, with his gracious assistance, thou mayest cast off from thy shoulders the heavy yoke of the world, the flesh, and the devil; and take up his light yoke, and rest in him for ever.

MARCH 19. *On St. JOSEPH.*

CONSIDER first, the testimony that the Holy Ghost has given to the virtue and sanctity of St. Joseph, in telling us in the gospel that he was *a just man*. And doubtless the Almighty would never have made choice of any man to be the chaste bridegroom of the purest of virgins, and the foster-father and guardian of his own divine Son, that was not consummate in purity and sanctity. Learn from hence, Christian souls, what kind of qualifications will make you also agreeable to Jesus and Mary: you will certainly drive them far away from you by criminal impurity. Admire the command St. Joseph had of his passions, in his joining perfect continency with the state of marriage; and in the evenness of soul, which he preserved under all events, how adverse soever: and learn of him to keep thy passions under subjection, and cheerfully to submit thy will in all occasions to the appointments of heaven.

Consider 2dly, the great examples St. Joseph has given us of all other virtues: his lively faith in a ready submission

mission of his soul to the belief of the most difficult mysteries, relating to the incarnation of the Son of God: his ardent love of his dearest Jesus: his concern and tender care for him in his infancy and childhood; and his wonderful diligence in all that belonged to his charge: his meekness and charity to the Blessed Virgin, when, to his unspeakable surprize, he found her with child: his ready obedience, without demur or reply, to every intimation of the will of heaven; whatsoever hardships or labours it might put him to; as in the case of his flight into Egypt: his patience under afflictions and persecutions: his humble submission, notwithstanding his royal extraction, to the toil and labour of a handicraft, to gain a poor livelihood for himself, and for Jesus and Mary, with the sweat of his brow: together with an amiable simplicity in his whole comportment, and a perpetual attention to God, by divine contemplation. Christians, let us imitate his virtues, whatsoever our station of life may be: we see by his example, that perfect sanctity may be found even in the midst of the distractions of a worldly calling: and that if we are not Saints, it is not the fault of our calling, but of our not corresponding with divine grace. St. Joseph found a great advantage to his soul from his having Jesus always in his company, and working with him: O let us also take care to have Jesus always with us, (wherever we are, or whatever we are doing) by a spirit of recollection, and a constant attention to him; and never to drive him away by any sinful conversation; or by entertaining his enemies in our interiour; and we shall quickly be sensible of the fruits his presence will bring to our souls.

Consider 3dly, and learn from the example of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, how great an error the world lies under, when it flies with so much eagerness from poverty and labour, as conceiving them to be great evils; which the wisdom of God made choice of for himself, for his blessed mother, and his reputed father; and which they have consecrated by their life and practice. And for thy part, my soul, have another way of thinking; and if thy

condition be that of the rich, be not puffed up with it; but rather humble thyself to see thou art so unlike to that blessed family; and fear the many dangers that riches are exposed to: despise not the poor, but ever honour and succour them, as the relations of Christ, or as Christ himself: thou hast his authority for doing so. If thou art poor, remember thou wearest the livery of Christ, and of his Family: comfort thyself in the resemblance thou bearest with them; and take care lest, by thy murmuring or impatience, thou lose any of the advantages which thy state entitles thee to. If thou followest any trade or handicraft, take St. Joseph for thy patron, and for thy pattern. Thou seest, by his example, that sanctity is not inconsistent with thy business. But then take heed, lest by any fraud, or injustice, or by an excessive solicitude for the things of this world, to the neglect of thy soul, thou banish Jesus from thy shop or house. Be sure to make him the companion of all thy labour; offer up all thou doest to him; and often entertain thyself with him. If God has blessed thee with children, take care, by an early diligence, to form Christ in them, by constantly instilling into their tender minds the fear and love of God, and the horror of sin: thus thou mayest, like St. Joseph, bring up Jesus, in these little ones.

Conclude to honour St. Joseph, by an imitation of his virtues: and, in order to this, implore the assistance of his prayers. His interest is great with our Lord; as St. Teresa declares she frequently experienced. Beg in particular his intercession, for the obtaining of a happy death. St. Joseph was happy in death, by having our Lord and the blessed Virgin to attend and assist him. Let us, like him, keep ever close to them in life, and they will be with us in death.

MARCH 25. *On the Annuntiation of the blessed Virgin.*

CONSIDER first, how the Angel Gabriel (Luke i. 26. &c.) was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a Virgin, espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the Angel being come in said to her, Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou among women. And when she had heard, she was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the Angel said to her: Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father; and he shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Christians, give attention to this most sacred and most solemn embassage, sent from the king of heaven, not to any of the great ones, or potenates of this world, but to a poor and humble maid: to treat with her upon the highest matters; even upon the great busines of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the establishment of his everlasting kingdom, and the redemption and salvation of man. Admire and adore the depth of the wisdom of the ways of God, (so much exalted above the maxims, and ways of the worldly wise) by which he is pleased to bring about such great things, without noise, or pomp, in so humble a manner, and by such humble instruments. And give thanks for that infinite goodness and love for us, which he has shewn in the mystery of this day.

Consider 2dly, the great lessons, the Blessed Virgin teaches us, by her whole comportment on this occasion. She is favoured with an embassage from God: she is greeted by one of the highest of the Angels, as full of divine grace: she is told that the Lord is with her, and that she is blessed among all women: and instead of being puffed up with these high favours, or taking any vain

complacency in these titles and encomiums, she is troubled at the words of the Angel, and, through the humble sentiments she has of herself, wonders what should be the meaning of such a salutation. She is assured by the Angel that *she has found grace with God*; and is chosen by him, to conceive and bear the Saviour of the world, even the Son of the most High: and so great is her love for virginal purity, that she is ready to forego the dignity of *mother of God*, rather than part with her virginity. *How shall this be done*, saith she, *because I know not man?* As being consecrated by vow to God; and determined to keep my vow. The Angel informs her, that she shall conceive by the Holy Ghost, and be overshadowed by the power of the most High, so as still to remain a pure maid. And then with a most profound humility, and a most perfect oblation of herself to God, and an entire conformity to his blessed will, she cries out: *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.* Let us study well, and learn of her the practice of these great lessons, of humility, love of purity, and perfect resignation of ourselves to the will of God.

Consider 3dly, how as soon as the blessed Virgin had thus given her consent, she immediately conceived by the Holy Ghost; who by his almighty power, formed a body out of her purest blood, and created an immortal soul for that body: and this body and soul were in that instant assumed, and united to the eternal Word, the Son of God, the second person of the adorable Trinity. And thus, was celebrated in the Virgin's womb the sacred wedding of our human nature with the divine person of the Son of God, to the feast of which we are all invited, Matthew xxii. Thus *the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us*, St. John i. This great mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God is the original source of all our good: in making God man, it has made man God. The Son of God, by taking upon him our humanity, makes us partakers of his divinity. He comes to be our Saviour and our Redeemer, to deliver us from all our evils: he comes

to be our advocate, and our physician : he comes to be our father, and our friend : he comes to be our king, and our priest, and *to make us kings and priests to his Father*. He stoops down to our dust, to raise us up from the dust, and to bring us *to sit down with him in his throne*, Apoc. iii. 21. See then, my soul, in what manner thou oughtest to celebrate this great festival of the conception of the Son of God ? What homage and adoration ; what praise and thanksgiving thou oweſt him for these wonders, he has wrought in thy favour : what return of love for his love to thee ? O welcome him at least to the best of thy power ; and ſince he comes to dwell amongſt us ; beg he would accept of the lodging of thy heart.

Conclude to keep for ever in thy soul, a faithful, grateful and loving remembrance of the mystery of the incarnation of the Son of God ; and a ſincere affection for his Virgin Mother : And with these diſpoſitions, frequently in the day repeat the angelical ſalutation ; more especially at the regular hours of the morning, noon and night.

ON ASH-WEDNESDAY.

CONSIDER first, how God calls upon us, by his prophet in the leſſon of this day. *Be converted to me, faſh he, with all your heart, in faſting, and in weeping, and in mourning : and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God.* Joel ii. 12, 13. Christians, hearken to this ſummons from heaven. O let it ſink deep into your ſouls : and if this day you hear the voice of God, sweetly inviting you to return to him in good earnest, now at this holy ſeaſon, harden not your hearts ; leſt provoked by your impenitence, he turn away from you, and you die in your ſins. O let us repent and amend, as we are admoniſhed by the church on this day, whilst we have time, leſt being overtaken by death, which is ever following at our heels, we ſhould ſeek for time of penance, and not be able to find it.

Consider

Consider 2dly, the meaning of the ashes which are put on our heads this day with those words: *Remember man that thou art dust: and into dust thou shalt return.* Sackcloth and ashes were the ancient habit of penitents. The Ninivites by fasting in sackcloth and ashes found mercy. Let these ashes then, which we receive on our heads, at the beginning of this penitential fast, be a lesson to us, to enter upon it with the like penitential spirit. They are an emblem of contrition and humility: let us receive them with a contrite and humble heart. They are also a remembrance of our mortality; of our frail composition, and of our hasty return to our mother earth. O let us think well on this; and renounce hence-forward our unhappy pride and presumption: O let us make good use of this our short time, and prepare for that moment, which shall e'er long send away our souls into another region, and turn our bodies into dirt and dust.

Consider 3dly, Christian soul, those words, as if they were addressed to thee, *yet forty days, and Ninive shall be destroyed.* Jonas iii. 4. Alas! have not thy sins, like those of Ninive, called to heaven this long time for vengeance? And hast thou not too much reason to fear, lest the mercy, which thou hast so long abused, should now quickly give place to justice, and should suffer thee to die in thy sins. Perhaps this is the last reprieve, that God will grant thee. In all appearance the good use or the abuse of these forty days may determine thy lot for an eternity.

Conclude then to spare no pains to avert the judgment that hangs over thy head; and so to spend these forty days of reprieve, in suing for mercy, after the manner God has appointed; that is, by fasting, weeping, and mourning, that thou mayest effectually find it.

THURSDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On fasting.

CONSIDER first, how much *fasting* is recommended to us, in the word of God, by the great example of Christ, and of his Saints, as well of the old as of the new testament; how we are there called upon to turn to God, with *fasting*. Joel ii. How the greatest sinners have there found mercy by *fasting*. Jonas iii. How we are there taught that all Christ's children are to *fast* during his absence from us. St. Matt. ix. 15. and that the devil is not to be cast out, but by prayer and *fasting*, St. Mark ix. 28. Man fell from God originally by intemperance; he returns to him by *fasting*. The gratifying our sensual appetite betrays us, both to the flesh, and to the devil: we overcome them both by *fasting*: by which (as the church daily inculcates in the preface for Lent) God restrains our vices and passions, elevates our souls to himself, and bestows upon us his heavenly gifts and graces. O happy *fasting* which drivest away all our evils, healest both soul and body; and bringest us to our sovereign good!

Consider 2dly, that there are three great advantages found in *fasting*. First it appeases the wrath of God, provoked by our sins: Inasmuch as by *fasting* for them, we acknowledge our guilt; and take part with his justice, in condemning and punishing ourselves. For there is nothing sooner moves God to shew us mercy, than the homage we pay to his justice, by exercising a wholesome severity against the wretch that has dared to offend God. O let us conceive a just indignation against this sinful flesh! Let us not spare the traitor, that has so often betrayed us into sin! Let a penitential fast be our regular exercise.

Consider 3dly, that another great advantage of *fasting* is, that we are enabled by it to overcome our passions and concupiscences. *Fasting*, when performed with a due spirit, humbles the soul exceedingly, and consequently restrains the irregular motions of all the passions that

that are the daughters of pride. It keeps the flesh in subjection, by depriving it of the principal nourishment of its rebellions and disorders; and obliges it to submit to the spirit. And which is a third advantage, in proportion to its weakening the passions of the flesh, it gives strength and vigour to the soul; sets it at liberty from the clogs that hinder its free application to heavenly truths; and enables it to fly upwards towards God, by purer prayer and contemplation.

Conclude to set a due value on this wholesome exercise, which has been the favourite of all the Saints; and has greatly contributed to make them the favourites of heaven. But take care that your fasting be accompanied with its proper attendants, that it may be such a fast as God has chosen.

FRIDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On the rules of fasting.

CONSIDER first, that fasting, according to the present discipline of the church, implies three things. First we are to abstain from flesh meat, on fasting days: secondly we are to eat but one meal in the day: and thirdly we are not to take our meal till about noon. The ancient discipline of the church was more rigorous, both in the point of the abstinence, and in not allowing the meal in Lent till the evening. These regulations are calculated to mortify the sensual appetite, by penance and self-denial. If you find some difficulty in the observance of them; offer it up to God for your sins. Fasting is not designed to please, but to punish. Your diligent compliance on this occasion with the laws of your mother the church, will also give an additional value to your mortification, from the virtue of obedience.

Consider 2dly, that we must not content ourselves with the outward observance of these regulations, that relate to our diet, on fasting days: but we must principally have regard to the inward spirit, and what we may call the very soul of the fast; which is a penitential

tential spirit. Without this the outward observance is but like a carcass without life. This penitential spirit implies a deep sense of the guilt of our sins, a horror and detestation of all our past disloyalties and treasons; and a hearty sorrow for them; a sincere desire to return to God, and to renounce our sinful ways for the future; and particularly a readiness of mind to make the best satisfaction we are capable of to divine justice, by penitencing ourselves for our sins. Fasting, performed in this spirit, cannot fail of moving God to mercy. O my soul, let thy fasting be always animated with this spirit!

Consider 3dly, that fervent *prayer*, and *alms-deeds* also, according to each ones ability, ought to be the inseparable companions of our *fasting*. These three sisters should go hand in hand, *Tob. xii. x.* to help us in our warfare against our three mortal enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil. The practice of these three eminent good works we must oppose to that triple concupiscence, which reigns in the world, and by means of which Satan maintains his unhappy reign. By fasting we overcome the lust of the flesh: by alms-deeds, we subdue the lust of the eyes, by which we are apt to covet the mammon of the world, and its empty toys: and by fervent and humble prayer we conquer the pride of life, and put to flight the devil, the king of pride. O let us never forget to call in these powerful auxiliaries to help us in our warfare. Let alms-deeds and prayer ever accompany our fasts.

Conclude to follow these rules, if you desire your fast should be acceptable: if you fail in them, it will not be such a fast as God hath chosen.

SATURDAY AFTER ASH-WEDNESDAY.

On the great fast of a Christian.

CONSIDER first, that the great and general fast of a christian is to abstain from sin. This fast obliges all sorts of persons, young and old, sick and healthy, at all times, and in all places. To pretend to fast,
and

and yet to go on in wilful sin, is a mockery, rather than a fast. What were the Pharisees the better for their fasting, while their souls were corrupted with pride, covetousness, malice, and hypocrisy? Did not God reject the fasts of the Jews (*Isaias lviii.*) because on the days of their fasting, they continued to provoke him by their customary sins? And will he be better pleased with us, if we, in pretending to fast, are guilty of the like disorders? No certainly. If then we would fast to the purpose: *Let the wicked man forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and let him return to the Lord, and then he will have mercy on him,* Isai. lv. 7.

Consider 2dly, that the true Christian fast should not only put a restraint upon the sensual appetite, in point of eating; but also extend itself to a more general mortification of every one of the senses and faculties; in, and by which, we have been liable to intemperance, or excess. The eyes, the ears, the tongue, and so of all the rest, ought likewise to fast, from curiosity, sensuality, vanity, carnal pleasures, idle conversations, theatrical shews, and other worldly and sensual diversions, unbecoming a serious Christian penitent at all times; but much more on days of fasting. But especially we are warned, *Isai. lviii. 3.* on the days of our fasting, to fast from our own will, humour, and passion, as that, which of all things is the most opposite to the fast which God hath chosen. O my soul, see thou take good notice of this lesson. Beware lest thou break thy fast, by indulging self-will, pride, and passion.

Consider 3dly, and weigh well the description given by the prophet Isaias, chap. lviii, of the fast that is acceptable to the Lord, and of its happy effects in the soul. *Is not this (saith the Lord) the fast that I have chosen? Loose the bands of wickedness --- and break asunder every burden. Deal thy bread to the hungry, and bring the needy and harbourless into thy house: when thou shalt see one naked, cover him, and despise not thy own flesh. Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thy health shall speedily arise, and thy justice shall go before thy face. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord will hear, &c. If thou wilt*

wilt take away the chain out of the midst of thee; and cease to speak that which is good for nothing. When thou shalt pour out thy soul to the hungry, and shalt satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise up in darkness.--- And the Lord will give thee rest continually, and fill thy soul with brightness --- And thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a fountain whose waters shall not fail.

Conclude ever to make it the great busines of thy fast, to break thy bands asunder, and to put away from thee the chains of sin; and then, by exercising works of mercy, thou thyself wilt be entitled to mercy, and to all that is good.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the fast of Lent.

CONSIDER first, that a fast of forty days has been recommended by the law, and the prophets, and sanctified by the example of Christ himself. Moses fasted forty days (*Exod. xxiv. 18.*) whilst he conversed with God in the mountain, when he received the divine law. And again, when the people had sinned, he returned to the Lord to the mountain, and fasted other forty days, *Exodus xxxiv. 28.* Elias fasted forty days in the wilderness, before he came to the mountain of God; where he was favoured with the vision of God, as far as man is capable of seeing him in this life. *3 Kings xix. 8.* Christ our Lord, before he entered upon his mission of preaching his Gospel, retired into a wilderness, and there employed forty days in prayer and fasting, *St. Matt. iv. 2.* How happy shall we be, if, by imitating, according to our small ability, these great examples, we may also draw near to God, by this forty days fast of Lent! But then, in order to this, we must join, as they did, retirement and much prayer with our fasting.

Consider 2dly, that the forty days of Lent, amongst Christians, is primitive and apostolical: it began with Christianity itself; and, with Christianity, has been received by all people and nations which have received

the faith and law of Christ. Embrace then, O my soul, this solemn penitential fast, this apostolical practice, this precious remnant of primitive discipline. But see it be with a penitential spirit. *Behold now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of salvation,* 2 Cor. vi. 2, Take thou care not to receive so great a grace in vain. These forty days, if thou make good use of them, will be happy days to thee. *O seek the Lord whilst he may be found, call upon him whilst he is near.* Isai. lv.

Consider gdly, that the great business of Lent is to do penance for our sins: to go daily with Magdalene to the feet of Christ; to wash them in spirit with penitential tears: to make our confession to him, and to lay down all our sins at his feet, begging that he would cancel them with his precious blood: to renounce them for ever; to detest them, and to bewail them in his sight: to offer him our poor hearts with all our affections, in order to make him the best amends we can, for our past disloyalties, by loving him with all our power for the time to come: that, as he said of Magdalene, St. Luke vii. *Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much;* so he may also say of us. In this spirit we should make a daily offering of our fasting, and of all the other self-denials, and penitential exercises of this time, to be united to the passion and death of the Son of God, and so to be accepted of, through him, in satisfaction for our sins. O do this, my soul, during these forty days, and thou shalt live.

Copclude to make good use of this holy time, in which mercy flows. O admire and adore that mercy which has endured thee so long, and which presses thee, now at least, to return to thy God. O take care, lest provoked by thy impenitence, he cut thee off in thy sins!

MONDAY AFTER THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the ends of the institution of Lent.

CONSIDER first, that, besides the great business of doing penance for the sins of the year, and of our whole lives, which is the main design of Lent; it is also instituted to be, in a particular manner, a time of devotion, in which we may worthily commemorate the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, and make them the subject of our daily meditations: in which also we may, by more than ordinary recollection and prayer, dispose our souls for duly celebrating the great paschal solemnity, and imitating therein the resurrection of the Son of God: and in which we may in such manner cleanse and purify our souls by spiritual exercises, as to be fit to approach worthily (as the church commands us) to the divine mysteries at Easter. See, my soul, thou keep Lent in such manner as to answer these ends.

Consider 2dly, that Lent is a time which God particularly claims for himself; as being the tithe of the year, which therefore ought to be set aside for him: As in the law he appointed that the tithes of all things should be sanctified to him, *Leviticus xxvii.* And surely nothing could be more just, than that we should offer our tithes, at least, to him that gives us all. How justly then does he require of us the tithes of our years, by our dedicating, these forty days, in a special manner, to his service? How religiously then, and how holily ought we to spend this time of Lent, that our performances may answer this great design of consecrating the tithe of the year to the divine service? An offering made to God ought to be without blemish: let our Lent offering be such.

Consider 3dly, that the time of Lent ought to be for people that live in the world, what a spiritual retreat is for regular communities. That is, a time in which, retiring as much as may be from the noise and distractions of the world, they may enter into themselves, and

take a serious view of the whole state of their interior. Now is the time for them to see and examine how the soul stands affected, with relation to her God, to her neighbours, and to herself: how she acquires herself of all her duties, as well those incumbent on all Christians, as those that are proper to her respective calling, or relative to those under her charge. Now is the time to search diligently after such secret sins as are apt to lie lurking in the soul; disguised by some pretext of good, or wrapt up under the folds of self-love. In a word, now is the time to acquire a true knowledge of ourselves, in order to apply a proper remedy to all our evils, and to lay a solid foundation of a good life for the future.

Conclude to answer, in the best manner thou art able, all these ends of the institution of Lent; and particularly apply thyself at this time to take as it were to pieces the whole method of thy life, and to reform all that thou findest amiss.

TUESDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

On the examination of the state of our interior.

CONSIDER first, the dreadful mischiefs that follow from our not knowing the true state of our own souls. Alas! what would it avail us, to have all other sciences, and to know all things else, if we should not know what passes within ourselves, and so should want this most necessary of all sciences, the knowledge of ourselves. Ah! how many are there in the world, who pass their whole lives in mortal sin; and yet, for want of looking into themselves, are not aware of it! How many imagine themselves to be alive, and *have the name of being alive, and yet are dead!* Apoc. iii. 1. How many imagine their souls to be rich and wealthy, and to stand in need of nothing, and they know not, that in the very truth, and in the sight of God, they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, Apoc. iii. 17. *O from my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord; and for the sins of others spare thy servant,* Ps. xviii. 13.

Consider,

Consider 2dly, that, to prevent so great an evil, every Christian ought often to examine into the true state of his interior, and to consider seriously what are the real dispositions of his soul, especially with regard to his God. He cannot be in the state of grace, or in the way of salvation, if he love not God above all things. Reflect, O my soul, is there nothing thou lovest more than God? Is there nothing that takes place of him in thy affections? How comes it then, that commonly God is so seldom thought on, in the course of the day? How comes it, that upon every occasion, worldly honour, temporal interest, sensual pleasures, the gratifying thyself, or the world, makes thee turn thy back on him? The true lover is ever thinking on the object of his love; and never better content than when in company, and conversing with his beloved. Is thy love of God such as this? Art thou resolutely determined, for no consideration whatsoever, for no honour, no interest, no pleasure, no human respect, no fear, no love, for nothing in fine, that the world can give, or take away, to be disloyal to thy God? If not, the love of God is not in thee, and thou art none of his. This is the best rule, by which thou mayest know, whether thou really lovest God, or no. But then, to know thy true disposition in this regard, examine thy works. *If you love me, saith the Lord, keep my commandments,* St. John xiv. 15.

Consider 3dly, that thou must also examine, how thy soul stands affected with regard to thy neighbour. For here is another great branch of the Christian's duty, in which his soul is no less interested, and in which too many deceive themselves. O my soul, art thou just in thy thoughts, words, and works, to thy neighbour? Dost thou live up to the rules of charity in his regard? Art thou not censorious in thy judgment; bitter in thy speeches; hasty and passionate in thy carriage to him? Dost thou never injure him in his reputation, by backbiting and detraction; in his honour, by affronts; in his friends, by tale-bearing; in the peace of his mind, by derision or contempt? Art thou just in all thy dealings

ings with him? Dost thou pay him his dues? Dost thou keep nothing from him unjustly? Dost thou do by him, in whatever station of life he may be, as thou wouldest be done by, if thou wert in his case? Is there no rancour in thy heart against any one soul upon earth? No secret hatred, malice, or envy? Examine thyself well upon all these heads, in which millions affect to deceive themselves, to their eternal perdition.

Conclude to labour seriously for the knowledge of thyself, that thou mayest effectually amend thy life, and secure thy soul. For why shouldest thou suffer thyself to be any longer blindfolded by passion, or affected ignorance, with evident danger of falling down the dreadful precipice which leads to a miserable eternity.

EMBER-WEDNESDAY, FIRST WEEK IN LENT.

On a farther examination of the soul.

CONSIDER first, that we must also examine the state of our souls, as to hidden sins, and as to such sins as we may be guilty of in others; for, in these kinds, many are guilty of great disorders, while they flatter themselves that all goes well with them. Few indeed, are ignorant of their *carnal* sins; though, even in these, sometimes persons deceive themselves: but very many take little or no notice of their *spiritual* sins, which are more interiour; and, though less infamous in the eyes of men, are more heinous in the sight of God: see then thou examine thyself thoroughly upon these heads; for spiritual sins are commonly very subtle, and not easily discerned, without a diligent search. Nay oftentimes such as are the most guilty, will not believe themselves guilty of them. These spiritual sins are of one of these five kinds, *viz.* pride, covetousness, envy, secret malice, and spiritual sloth. Look into them one by one, and if thy self-love will suffer thee to be impartial in thy search, in all appearance thou wilt find thyself more guilty than thou art aware of.

Consider 2dly, in particular, how full thou art of thyself; how fond of every thing that flatters thee; how presumptuous

presumptuous of thy own sufficiency; how apt to compare thyself with others, in thy thoughts, and to give thyself the preference; how apt to despise others; how unwilling to suffer any reproof or contradiction; how ready to fwell with indignation upon every trifling opposition or contempt; how apt to break out into a storm upon every supposed affront; how much concerned at what the world will think, or say, of thy performances; how much more solicitous for thy worldly honour than for the glory of God. And what is all this but an unhappy pride, which is laying waste thy soul, and corrupting its very vitals, whilst thou art insensible of it. See also, as to covetousnes, whether the love of the mammon of the world does not reign in thy heart. Alas, the greatest miser does not think himself covetous! but the tree is to be known by its fruits; such as an anxious care and a perpetual solicitude about the things of the world; and upon this account neglecting prayer, and other spiritual duties; or being continually distractred in them; thinking more of thy money than of thy God; locking up thy heart in thy chest; losing thy peace upon every loss or disappointment; and a strange unwillingnes to part with thy money, even when the honour of God, or thy neighbour's necessities call for it. See if nothing of this be thy case. See if thou art not more afraid of losing thy worldly substance, than thy God. If so, thou art not in the way to heaven.

Consider 3dly, as to the other *spiritual* sins; whether there be no person for whom thou hast a secret *envy*? No one whose praises, whose endowments, corporal or spiritual, whose virtues, or performances, make thee uneasy, and gnaw thy soul, as if their advantages were a lessening to the honour, praise, and esteem which thou affectest? O! How common is this mortal crime; and how many detractions and other evils does it produce! and yet how many take very little notice of it! Is it not thy case? Then as to secret *malice*, rancour, and hatred, how dost thou stand affected? Look well into thyself; for here again we are too apt to deceive ourselves:

but

but we must judge of the tree by the fruits; that is, by our way of thinking, speaking, and acting, with relation to our supposed enemies. Now there is so very wide a difference between the fruits of charity, and those of malice, between love and hatred, that if we are sincere in our examination, we cannot well be deceived therein. And as to *spiritual sloth*, which is a clog upon the soul, infinitely opposite to the love of God, to the spirit of prayer, to a due care in frequenting the sacraments and other duties; is not this also a most common evil, which frequently amounts to a mortal sin: and yet how seldom do lukewarm souls take notice of it.

Conclude upon declaring an eternal war against all these vices: and particularly against that which thou hast reason to apprehend is thy predominant passion, that is to say, the chiefest and most dangerous of all thy enemios.

THURSDAY IN EMBER-WEEK.

On other sins which we are to examine into.

CONSIDER first, that, in order to know the true state of our souls, we must also examine how we discharge ourselves of all our duties; and not only of all such duties as are common to all Christians, but also of all such as are particularly incumbent on us in our station of life. Alas! How many take notice of their sins of commission, but not of their sins of omission! How many make some account of such duties as relate to the regulating *themselves*; but are not concerned to see that others under their charge, serve the Lord! How many examine themselves upon the commandments of God, and the precepts of the church, as far as they appertain to all Christians in general; but pass over the particular duties and obligations annexed to their calling, or state of life; to which nevertheless they are strictly bound either by law, or by covenant, or by oath, or by the very nature of their calling. Reflect thou my soul on all these things. The grand duty of man, the great end for which he came into the world

world, his whole business in life, is to dedicate and consecrate his very being and his whole life to the love and service of his maker. All thy days O man are given thee for this end. The omission of this great duty is highly criminal: it is usually the first sin that man falls into. And yet how few sufficiently reflect on it! Alas how many millions of souls are lost by this omission; who though they are neither guilty of blasphemy, nor murder, nor adultery, nor theft, &c. are justly condemned for the omission of dedicating themselves in earnest to the love and service of God!

Consider 2dly, Christian soul, what care thou takest of thy children, of thy servants, and of all under thy charge. The regularity of thy own life, will never bring thee to heaven, if, through thy negligence of them, their lives be irregular. Reflect well on this; and see if thou art not guilty of many criminal omissions in this kind. Again reflect on the particular obligations annexed to thy calling: and how far thou performest what the law of God, or man, requires of thee in thy station; for example, that of a pastor, a teacher, a lawyer, a physician, a tradesman, a servant, &c. See whether thou makest good thy covenants? And if any oath were required at thy first admission, or afterwards, see what care thou hast taken to discharge thyself of the obligation of it? Alas how many, in entering upon their respective callings, take certain oaths, and afterwards perhaps think no more of them! And can this be the way to heaven? See then how necessary it is that a Christian, who has a mind to secure his soul, should look well into himself.

Consider 3dly, whether thou hast nothing to apprehend with regard to thy salvation, from the sins of other men? And this not only from thy *omissions*; or thy neglect of restraining those under thy charge from sin, or of keeping away from them the occasions of sin. But because of thy *commissions* too, in promoting or encouraging sin by word or work; in enticing, or provoking to sin; in flattering or applauding people in their sins; and in contributing to keep up the pernicious

cious maxims of the world, in point of honour, interest and pleasure, by which numbers of poor souls are enslaved to sin, and dragged into hell. Reflect withal how little guard thou generally hast upon thy words, in thy ordinary conversation, and whether thy carelessness therein may not frequently be attended with very bad consequences to the souls of thy neighbours, by giving them some occasion or other of sin, either in thought, word, or deed? Alas! How many sins will be brought to light in the great day, which careless souls in the time of this life but little apprehend; and so continue till death, in the guilt of them.

Conclude to make such good use of the spiritual exercises of this time; and especially to study so well what passes within thee, as to be no longer blind to thy own sins; and a stranger at home. O my God! do thou give me grace, now at least, perfectly to know myself. O grant that I may renounce, and do penance for all my past sins, and henceforward settle my soul upon a more secure bottom, which may stand for eternity.

FRIDAY, EMBER-WEEK.

On exercising works of mercy.

CONSIDER first, that in order to find mercy, we must shew mercy. *Blessed are the merciful, saith our Lord, for they shall obtain mercy,* Matt. v. 7. And on the other hand, *judgment without mercy,* saith St. James, *to him that hath not done mercy,* Chap. ii. 13. God expressly rejects the faults of them that refuse to shew mercy to their neighbours, *Isaias lviii.* He declares he will neither give ear to their prayers; nor accept of their sacrifices. *Prov. xxi. 13. Isai. i. 11, 15, 16, 17, 18.* If then, my soul, thou desirest at this time effectually to lie for the divine mercy, in the forgiveness of thy sins; see that thy fasting and prayer be accompanied with alms-deeds. *If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to be willing to bestow a little,* Tob. iv. 9. This mercy and charity

charity exercised by thee, will recommend thy fasting, and thy prayer to that God who is all charity, and whose tender mercies are above all his works.

Consider 2dly, how many ways, and upon how many occasions, the word of God recommends alms-deeds to us. It promises an eternal kingdom in heaven, to all them that are diligent in this exercise, and threatens with eternal damnation all them that are negligent. St. Matt. xxv. It shews that the definitive sentence, which is to decide our eternal doom, is to pass upon each one of us according to his behaviour in this respect. *Ibid.* It encourages even the greatest sinners, to redeem their sins with alms, and their iniquities with works of mercy to the poor, Daniel iv. 24. It assures them, that by the means of alms all things shall be made clean to them. St. Luke xi. 41. That alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness. Tob. iv. 11. That Christ considers what is done for the poor, as done for himself, and will reward it accordingly, St. Matt. xxv. That he that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay him, Prov. xix. 17. To pass over many other texts, promising all kind of good, both for this world and the next, to works of mercy; and threatening the hard hearted, and unmerciful with the worst of God's Judgments. O! my soul attend to these heavenly oracles; embrace with all the affection of thy heart this lovely virtue of mercy, the favourite daughter of the great King. It was mercy brought him down from heaven to thee; and mercy must carry thee up to him thither.

Consider 3dly, the conditions that must accompany our alms, that they may be capable of producing these great effects, 1. They must be liberal, and proportionable to our ability: *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap but sparingly.* What then can the worldling expect, who for every penny he gives to God, in the person of the poor, gives a pound to the devil, and to his own passions and lusts?—2dly, Our alms must be given with a pure intention: that is, not out of ostentation, or vain glory; or for any other human motive; but

but for God's sake: otherwise they will have no reward from God. 3dly, Our alms can never effectually procure for us the remission of our sins; except we join with them a sincere repentance for our sins, together with an effectual resolution of loving and serving God for the future. Christians, take good notice of these three articles: and particularly remember that neither alms, nor any thing else, can give any manner of security to any man that wilfully persists in mortal sin.

Conclude to esteem, love and practise upon every occasion, this blessed virtue of mercy. But see that thy intention be pure: and beware of losing the benefit of it by an impenitent heart.

SATURDAY IN EMBER-WEEK.

On the spiritual works of mercy.

CONSIDER first, that the *spiritual works of mercy*, by which we relieve our neighbours in the necessities of their souls, are of far greater value in the sight of God, than such as merely relate to their bodies. If then he is pleased to promise such ample rewards, to the feeding the hungry, cloathing the naked, and such like good works, which relate only to these corruptible carcases, and to the short time of our mortal pilgrimage: how much more will he esteem and reward those works of mercy and charity, by which immortal souls, made after God's own image, and redeemed by the blood of Christ, are drawn out of darkness and sin, rescued from Satan and hell, and brought to God and a happy eternity? *He that causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his way, saith the Scripture, shall save his soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins, St. James v. 20. And they that instruct many to justice, shall shine as stars for all eternity, Daniel xii. 3.*

Consider 2dly, that the spiritual works of mercy are principally exercised: by reclaiming sinners from their evil ways, even the ways of death and hell, by admonitions, remonstrances, fraternal corrections, &c. by enlightening and instructing such as through ignorance,

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are in danger of losing their precious soul; or by procuring them this light and instruction from other proper persons, by comforting the afflicted, encouraging the pusillanimous, upholding and assisting them that are under temptations, reconciling such as are at variance, bearing with all, forgiving all, ever overcoming evil with good, and praying for all. O how happy; how precious in the sight of God is a life spent in such works of mercy and charity as these are! And how happy will that death be, that shall conclude such a life! O my soul, that we may lead such a life! O that we may die such a death.

Consider 3dly, that these spiritual works of mercy, are not only the most acceptable of all, and the most meritorious in the sight of God; but also are of strict obligation: and this not only to pastors, but to all other Christians, according to their circumstances and abilities. Charity is a virtue of universal obligation. And the principal object of that love, which charity obliges us to have for our neighbours, is the eternal welfare of their immortal souls. If then we can unconcernedly see numbers of souls crowding into hell, without affording them all the help that lies in our power, in order to rescue them from that extremity of endless misery; is it not evident, that we have no charity for them? and if not; may not our case one day be as bad as theirs? What then must we do? We must gladly lay hold of every opportunity, of contributing what lies in us to the conversion and salvation of any one of these poor unhappy souls: and we shall quickly find that opportunities of this nature will not be wanting, if we take the matter to heart. At least there are two ways, and those the most effectual of all, of reclaiming sinners, and bringing them to God; which are certainly in the power of every one; and from which no one can be excused: and these are the example of a holy life, and the efficacy of fervent prayer poured out to God in behalf of poor sinners.

Conclude ever to make use of these two, the most effectual, ways of bringing sinners to God; Yet so, as

not to neglect any other means that lay in thy power. What a comfort will it be to thee: what an honour, what a happiness, to be the instrument of God, in the salvation of souls; that same great work, which brought the Son of God from Heaven! But what dreadful punishments mayest thou not justly apprehend, if for want of this charity, any of these souls should perish, because thou wouldest not lend them a helping hand, to withdraw them from the precipice, to which they were running. Ah! will not their blood one day cry to heaven for vengeance against thee?

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On Prayer.

CONSIDER first, that the time of Lent is not only a time for fasting and giving alms; but is also in a particular manner a time of devotion and prayer. Fasting, alms and prayer are three sisters, which ought to go hand in hand, and with united forces, to offer a holy violence to heaven, which is not to be taken but by violence. If then prayer be at all times necessary; if it be the very life of a Christian soul; it is certainly a most indispensable part of our duty at this holy time. But what is prayer? It is a conversation with God: It is a raising up of the mind, and of the heart to God: It is an address of the soul to God, in which we present him with our homage, our adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; we exercise ourselves in his presence, in acts of faith, hope and love; and we lay before him all our necessities, and those of the whole world; begging mercy, grace and salvation at his hands. O my soul how happy it is, how glorious, how pleasant, to entertain thyself thus with thy God! Is it not in some measure anticipating the joys of heaven? For what is heaven but to be with God?

Consider 2dly, more in particular, the most excellent advantages the soul enjoys by the means of prayer. It gives her a free access, whenever she pleases, to come before the throne of his divine majesty; and to make her

her addresses to him, at any hour of the day or night; with a positive assurance from him of meeting with a favourable audience. It admits her, as often as she pleases, into his private closet, where she may find him all alone, and treat with him with all freedom as long as she will; and she may be assured he will never be wearied with her importunity, nor shut the door against her. Will any prince of the earth allow any thing like this even to his greatest favourite? O Christian soul, what an honour is this! And why art not thou more ambitious of it?

Consider gdry, how delightful prayer is to the soul that truly loveth God. The true lover finds the greatest pleasure in thinking on, and speaking with the object of his love. If then the soul truly love God, nothing will be more sweet to her, than this heavenly intercourse and conversation with her sovereign good. The saints have found it so, when they have passed whole nights in prayer, and thought the time very short, through the delight they found in the company of their beloved. O my soul if thou find no such delight in prayer, see if it be not for want of love.

Conclude to embrace this heavenly exercise of prayer, at all opportunities. Here is to be found thy greatest honour, interest and pleasure: and in a word, thy whole happiness both for time and eternity.

SECOND MONDAY IN LENT.

On the necessity of prayer.

CONSIDER first, that all Christians are indispensably obliged to prayer: because it is a homage and worship we owe to God. He is our first beginning, and our last end: he is the inexhaustible source of all our good: therefore he justly expects we should daily worship him: and daily acknowledge our total dependence on him, by a diligent application to him by prayer. We are all bound both by our creation and redemption, frequently to present ourselves before the throne of God, with acts of adoration, praise and thanks-

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giving: we are all bound to honour him, by frequent acts of faith, hope and love: and it is in prayer, and by prayer, we perform these duties: they are all neglected, if prayer be neglected. It was appointed in the divine law, that twice every day, *viz.* morning and evening, an unspotted lamb should be offered in sacrifice, in the temple of God, as a daily worship, he expected from his people: and shall not the children of the new law be equally obliged, twice a day at least, to offer up their homage of prayer in the temple of their hearts. Daniel chose rather to be cast into the den of the lions, than not worship his God by prayer, three times a day. And shall not this convince Christians of the strict necessity of this exercise.

Consider 2dly, the necessity of prayer, in as much as it is, by divine appointment, the channel through which the graces, and blessings of God are to flow into our souls. We can do nothing, towards our salvation, without the grace of God: but with his grace we can do all things. Now prayer is the great means of procuring, and obtaining this all necessary grace: *Ask, and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you.* O how often is this repeated and inculcated in holy writ! How much are we there pressed to be earnest and fervent in prayer! Does our God then stand in need of us, or our prayers? No certainly. He stands not in need of us: but we continually stand in need of him; and therefore out of love to us, he is so often pressing us to pray: because he sees that without frequent and fervent prayer we must be for ever miserable. Blessed be his name for this his infinite charity.

Consider 3dly, the necessity of prayer, from the warfare, in which we are engaged, the whole time of our mortal pilgrimage, with three most desperate enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil. We are surrounded with dangers on all sides, and with dangers that threaten us with nothing less than the loss of God and a miserable eternity. We walk in the midst of snares: our way is beset with robbers and murderers; we breathe a pestilential air: we live in a *world*, that is very wicked;

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in the midst of worldlings, a deluded people, who are strangers to the gospel; who by word and work encourage sin; and seek to drag us along with them into the broad road of perdition. We carry about with us a load of *flesh*, which weighs down the poor soul, and tyrannizes over her with its passions and lusts: these hold a correspondence with the third enemy, the *devil*, and are ever ready to betray us to him, to make us his companions in never ending wo. We have whole legions of his wicked angels to fight against; crafty and malicious spirits, bent upon sparing no pains to destroy us. And what shall we do? Or what can we do, to escape all these dangers, and to overcome all these enemies? We must *watch and pray*: and God will watch over us; and give us the victory over them all. Prayer will engage God on our side: and all our enemies shall fall before us: for if God is with us, it is no matter who is against us.

Conclude to have recourse to prayer in all dangers and temptations: and since our whole life is full of dangers and temptations, let us make our whole life, as much as possible, a life of prayer.

SECOND TUESDAY IN LENT.

On attention in prayer.

CONSIDER first, that the most essential condition to make our prayer either acceptable to God, or beneficial to ourselves, is a serious attention: It deserves not the name of prayer without it. To pray with wilful distractions, is a mockery: it is affronting the divine majesty. *This people, saith he, honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Isai. xxix. See, my soul, if this be not too often thy case? And if so, seek a speedy remedy for so great an evil. There needs no greater to sink thee into the very depth of all misery for time and eternity. For as he cannot fail to live well, who has found the way to pray well: So he that prays ill, must not expect to live well, or die well.

Consider 2dly, that in order to pray well, our heart and mind must go always along with what we are about; or, which is the best attention of all, and most conducing to bring us to the love of God, our thought must then be fixed in God; not considered as abroad, but as within our own souls; not as represented by corporeal images, but as the being of all beings, the eternal, incomprehensible, infinite truth. But that we may be better able to keep this attention in the time of prayer, we must hearken to the admonition of the wise man. *Before prayer, prepare thy soul, and be not like a man that tempteth God.* This preparing the soul for prayer consists, in discharging beforehand, as much as possible, all foreign thoughts; restraining even at other times all the rovings of the imagination, and vain amusements; untying the heart from its disorderly affections; and beginning by a serious recollection of the soul in the presence of God; and an earnest address to him, to teach us, and help us to pray as we ought.

Consider 3dly, that if, after taking these precautions, we still find ourselves hurried away with a multitude of distractions, in the time of prayer, we must not be discouraged. For as long as our will has no share in these distractions; they will not be imputed to us; nor hinder the fruit of our prayers. It is the heart, it is the will that God regards: our care must be to keep this right; to set out at first with a good heart, and a will to seek our heavenly father: and not to retract this by any wilful turning aside from him: and we may be assured that he that seeks, and sees the heart, will not be offended at the involuntary wanderings of the imagination, which can never separate the soul from him.

Conclude upon ever keeping a close guard upon thy mind, and upon thy heart, if thou desire to pray well: and this not only at the time of prayer, but at all times. For if thou livest in a constant dissipation of thought, at other times; and with a heart set upon irregular affections, and cheating vanities: how canst thou expect, but that both thy mind and heart in the time of prayer will be still running after those things they are accus-
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temed to; and which they have unhappily made their treasure, instead of God?

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

On other conditions of prayer,

CONSIDER first, those words of St. James iv. 3.
You ask, and you receive not, because you ask amiss. Great promises are made in holy writ, in favour of prayer: but these are to be understood, provided we ask for *what* we ought, and in the *manner* we ought. But if we are more concerned for the temporal goods of this transitory life, than for the eternal welfare of our souls; and make such things as those the principal subject of our prayers: we must not think much if God does not hear us. For in these cases, we often know not what we ask; or we know not at least what is expedient for us; and it is a mercy of God not to grant us those things, which, if he were to grant them, might be the occasion of the loss of our souls. In our prayer, we must *seek first the kingdom of God, and his justice;* and as to those other things, God will give us them as far as he sees expedient for us. And if at any time we pray for such things; or pray to be delivered from sufferings and crosses; we must ever pray with submission, and conformity to the will of God; *if it be his will;* and if he sees it expedient; and not otherwise: *Not my will, but thine be done.*

Consider 2dly, that we must not only pray for such things as are truly good; as being agreeable to God's holy will, and conducing to our true and everlasting welfare: but we must also pray in a proper manner; that is, with a pure intention, and with a lively faith, and confidence in God. Great promises are made in Scripture to prayer; but it is to prayer made with faith, and confidence in God. The honour of his divine majesty is engaged to stand by those that pray with a strong belief, and trust in him. But as for him that prayeth, *wavering in faith;* let him not think that he shall

shall receive any thing of the Lord, James i. 6. If then we would pray to the purpose: we must come before God with a lively sense of his boundless power, goodness and mercy; with a conviction of his being ever faithful to his promises; and that his divine truth cannot fail. And we must not trust in the least in ourselves, nor ground ourselves upon any merits of our own: but put an entire confidence in God; who is more desirous to give us his grace than we are to ask it: and we shall quickly experience how ready he will be to shew us mercy, and to hear our prayers. So true it is, that no one ever trusted in him and was confounded.

Consider 3dly, that, in order to obtain our requests, we must take care to present them in the name of Jesus Christ, and through the merits of his death and passion. What we ask of God, is mercy, grace, and salvation: now our faith assures us, there is no means of coming at mercy, grace, or salvation, but through Jesus Christ. *No one can come to the Father but by him,* St. John xiv. 6. Whatsoever we shall ask the Father in his name, shall be given to us. Chap. xvi, 23, 24. *But there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved,* Acts iv. 12. Here then is the great grounds of that faith and confidence, with which we draw near to God, and address our prayers to him: the Son of God has died for us: he has made over to us the merits of his death and passion: he has purchased for us those graces which we pray for: his blood continually pleads in our behalf. Through him then let us go with confidence to the throne of grace: that we may obtain mercy, and find grace in seasonable aid. Heb. iv. 16.

Conclude to take the blood of Christ along with you, as often as you desire to go within the veil, by prayer, into the sanctuary of God: This will open to you the way to all mercy, grace, and salvation.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On fervour in prayer.

CONSIDER first, the necessity of fervour in prayer: that is to say, that we should be quite in earnest in our addresses to God. For how can we expect, that God should hear, or regard our supplications, when we present them with so much indolence and indifference, as if we told the Almighty, we did not care, whether he heard us, or no? Such luke-warm prayer as this, instead of drawing down his blessing upon us, will rather move him to indignation. It is doing the work of God negligently: which is a thing of the worst consequence to a Christian soul. Fervour and earnestness in prayer is recommended to us by the great example of the Son of God, who in the days of his flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offered up his prayers, and supplications: Heb. v. 7. It is recommended by the doctrine, and example of all the Saints. Not a fervour of the imagination, but of the will: not expressed by the motion of the head, or any outward gestures of the body, but consisting in the strong desires of the soul, suing with all her power for the mercy and grace of God.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord recommends to us, St. Luke xviii. 1. *That we should always pray, and not to faint;* that is, not to be discouraged, nor to give over, if we do not immediately find the effect of our prayers; but, by the example of the poor widow, whose importunity prevailed even upon a wicked judge, till he continued to knock at the gate of heaven, till God is pleased to open to us, according to his merciful promise. Perseverance in prayer, and a holy importunity, were the means by which the Saints obtained such great things of God. It is well if the want of these be not the true reason why we are not favoured in the like manner. The hand of God is certainly not shortened. But alas! we have not that faith, that fervour, that perseverance, which they had, who like their Lord, passed sometimes even whole nights in prayer.

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Consider 3dly, that nothing contributes more to render our prayers effectual with God, than a profound humility. *A contrite and humble heart God never despises.* *The prayer of him that humbleth himself,* saith the wise man, *Ecclus. xxxv. 21. shall pierce the clouds --- and not depart, till the most High behold.* Humility always finds admittance with God, who ever *refuseth the proud, and gives his grace to the humble.* If then, my soul, thou desirest that thy prayers should find admittance, see they be ever accompanied with humility. *I will speak to my Lord,* said holy Abraham, *Gen. xviii. 27. whereas I am but dust and ashes.* Alas! poor soul of mine, thy whole being is a mere nothing in the sight of that great God, before whom thou presentest thyself in prayer. His majesty fills heaven and earth; and both heaven and earth dwindle away to just nothing at all in his presence. But what a figure then do thy crimes and abominations make in his eyes? And how wretched an object do they make of thee! See then what pressing motives thou hast to humble thyself in prayer, in consideration of thy sins; and of what thou hast deserved by them. Nothing but humble prayer can remedy all thy evils, and this will effectually do it.

Conclude ever to pray with fervour and humility: and in order thereto, begin always thy prayer by placing thyself in the presence of God; and humbly imploring the assistance of his divine Spirit. None but he can teach thee to pray well.

FRIDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT,

On mental prayer.

CONSIDER first, that the great advantages, and excellence of prayer, are chiefly found in *mental prayer*, that is to say, in such kind of prayer as is not confined to any form of words, but is made in the secret closet of the heart; where the soul all alone, finds her God alone, and entertains herself with him. The advantages of this kind of prayer, beyond that which is only *vocal*, are, that it brings us nearer to God, and to his

his heavenly light; that it employs all the powers of the soul, *viz.* the memory, the understanding, and the will, about him; that it opens the eyes of the soul to the knowledge of God, and of ourselves; and is the true school in which we learn to despise the world, and its cheating vanities; and to love God with our whole hearts. O my soul, see thou daily frequent this school of divine love!

Consider 2dly, that the Saints, and other masters of a spiritual life, have prescribed certain rules and methods of mental prayer, with a variety of subjects, to make the practice easy. According to these rules and methods, the soul begins, by placing herself in the presence of her God, and by humbly imploring his divine assistance: Then the memory represents the subject of the prayer; and the understanding is employed in considering the heavenly truths discovered therein: till the will is properly affected therewith, and stirred up to the fear and love of God; to an humble confidence in his goodness; to a sense of gratitude for his benefits; to a horror of sin; and a sincere repentance for past offences; and such like affections: which ought to be followed by good and firm resolutions of avoiding evil and doing good; and in particular, of the immediate amending such failings as one is most subject to. Such is the method of mental prayer, by way of meditation, recommended by St. Ignatius, St. Francis Sales, and other Saints: and both very easy and beneficial to Christian souls; by its serving greatly to enlighten their understanding, and to inflame their will. Give thanks, my soul, to thy God, for the lights he has communicated to his Saints, to direct thee, in this sovereign exercise of mental prayer; and particularly practise what they recommend, with regard to the insisting principally, in thy prayer, upon affections and resolutions; lest otherwise thy meditations fall short of answering the chiefest end of prayer, which is the love of God, and the amendment of thy life.

Consider 3dly, that although this method of mental prayer be excellent, and such as ought to be followed, where

where the soul does not find herself invited and attracted another way; yet as *the spirit breatheth where he will*, John iii. 8. and as we must not pretend to set bounds, or give rules to him, who expects to be ever acknowledged as sovereign Lord and King within our souls, and to establish his reign there by mental prayer: if he should be pleased to advance the soul to the more perfect prayer of contemplation, (in which she finds herself drawn nearer to God, quite alone with him, and absorpt in his love) she must not be restrained, by any of these usual forms, or methods, from following that happy call; and thankfully yielding herself up a captive to divine love. For it must ever be the rule of the soul, which desires to have the kingdom of God established in her interiour, by way of mental prayer, to follow God and his divine attractions; yet so as to take a guide along with her, for fear of being imposed upon by taking the suggestions of Satan, or of her own pride and self-love, for the motions of the Spirit of God.

Conclude to exercise thyself daily in mental prayer, as the great means to bring thee to God. Let no pretext of business call thee off from this exercise: nothing can be of half so much importance to thy true welfare: it is the very way to heaven. The morning is the best time for it, and half an hour at least ought to be dedicated to it.

SATURDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the practice of mental prayer.

CONSIDER first, the great error of many Christians, who imagine the practice of mental prayer to be very difficult; and therefore are discouraged from undertaking this exercise, by the vain apprehension of not being able to succeed in it: an error which the devil endeavours to propagate with all his power, because he fears nothing more than mental prayer, as being the direct ruin of his usurpation, and the establishment of the kingdom of God in the soul. To confute this error, and to take away this prejudice, against so necessary an exercise;

exercise; reflect that there is no such mystery in mental prayer, as people vainly imagine; that it consists in considerations and affections, that is, in *thinking* and *loving*: and this, in *thinking* on subjects, generally the most easy, and the most copious that can be; and, at the same time, of the utmost importance to the soul; and in *loving* him, whom by *thinking* we find to be every way the most worthy of our love. We can easily *think* of our other affairs, and even of every trifle that comes in our way: nay *thinking* is so natural to us, that we cannot help thinking of something, whenever we are awake. And shall *thinking* be then only difficult, when we are to think of matters of the utmost consequence to our everlasting welfare? Or shall *loving* be difficult to a soul that was made to love, and that never can find rest but in her love; and whom God, by his grace, is continually inviting and pressing to love him?

Consider 2dly, that the subjects for mental prayer, which are the most necessary, are withal the most easy; such as those that are recommended by St. Teresa, in her writings, and by her own practice: viz. 'The true knowledge of ourselves, and what we are, both as mortals, and as sinners: how much we owe to God; and how much we have offended him; and how ungrateful we still are to him: what he is; and how much he loveth us; and what he hath done for us: the great humiliations and sufferings of the Son of God, for our redemption from sin and Satan: the sudden vanishing of all present things; and the eternal punishments and rewards to come.' Such meditations as these are no ways difficult or curious, but easy for every capacity; and withal open a fine field for the soul to expatiate in: and from these it will be easy for her to pass on to a variety of pious affections, suitable to the subject of the meditation. But more especially such considerations as these serve very much for enkindling in the soul the *love* of God, and a desire of being grateful to him, and of never more offending him: when we reflect what he, the Lord of glory, infinite in majesty, has done and suffered for us, such poor

wretches as we are, to deliver us from such torments which we had deserved; and to purchase for us such glory, of his own pure mercy and goodness.

Consider godly, that it is also easy for the soul to practise mental prayer, in the way of familiar colloquies, or entertainments with our Lord: conversing, and discoursing with him, as we would do, if we had him visibly present with us; as when he was here amongst men in his mortal life: treating with him as with a parent, a friend, a benefactor, as with our high priest, our advocate, our physician, our director, our brother, our spouse, our head, our Redeemer, &c. sometimes humbling ourselves before him, confessing, and begging pardon for our many disloyalties; at other times representing to him our many infirmities; minding him of his promises; thanking him for his great patience towards us; condoling with him in his sufferings, and the daily affronts he receives from obstinate sinners; promising a new life for the future; offering all that we have, and our whole being to him; petitioning him for our many spiritual wants and necessities, &c. For, 'since we never want words,' saith St. Teresa, 'to talk with other persons, why should we, to speak with God?' And surely none can want matter, to converse and discourse about with him, but such as think they owe nothing to him, and neither here, nor hereafter, desire, or expect any thing from him.

Conclude to let no apprehensions of difficulties discourage thee from the daily practice of mental prayer. The grace of God will make it easy to thee, if thou continue resolute in using thy best endeavours. Be not frightened if thou meet with nothing at first, but dryness and distractions; let thy will be good, and these will not hurt thee: God, in his good time, will let the light of his countenance shine upon thee. By perseverance in this exercise, thou wilt, at length, dig out a treasure, which will abundantly recompence whatever labour thou hast taken in digging.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On devotion to the Passion of Christ.

CONSIDER first, that meditating on the sufferings and death of our Redeemer, ought to be a principal part of the Christian's devotion, during the time of Lent. For the season approaches in which we celebrate the yearly memory of our Lord's passion: and therefore the church, which at no time can forget the sufferings and death of her heavenly spouse, at this time particularly recommends to her children, to set before their eyes their crucified Saviour, and to make him the great object of their devotion. His passion is the overflowing source of all mercy, grace, and salvation to us; all our good must be derived from his cross: therefore, the more we approach to him in his sufferings, and station ourselves near the cross, by pious meditations on his passion, the more plentifully shall we partake of that mercy and grace which flow continually from those fountains of life, his precious wounds. The great design of Lent is, that the sinner should now return to God, and sue for pardon and mercy; and what better means can he have for this, than by taking along with him to the throne of mercy, the blood of Christ, by daily meditating on his passion?

Consider 2dly, that the passion of Christ has been always, from the beginning of the world, the great object of the devotion of the children of God: in all their bloody sacrifices of old, of oxen and sheep, they celebrated beforehand the death of the Lamb of God, slain in figure from the beginning of the world. And as, from the time of the fall of Adam, no grace could ever be derived to any man, but through the channel of the merits of the death and passion of our Redeemer; whose future coming was revealed to man immediately after his fall: so no sacrifices could ever be acceptable to God, but such as had relation to him, and through faith in him. Much more now, under the new law,

are all the faithful obliged to make the passion of Christ the great object of their devotion: since he has instituted the eucharistical sacrifice and sacrament, and left us therein the sacred mysteries of his body and blood; for this very end, that, in our most solemn worship, we should have always before our eyes his passion and death. See, my soul, how much thy God desires thou shouldst remember what he has suffered for thee. And why? Doubtless that by this means thou mightest be confirmed in his love. O blessed be his goodness for ever!

Consider godly, how ungrateful all such Christians are, as forget the sufferings and death of their Redeemer: may they not all be reckoned in the number of those, of whom he complained of old, by the royal prophet; that they left him alone in his passion, and took no notice of him. *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know me,* Ps. cxli. Had the meanest man upon earth suffered but the tenth part of what our Lord has suffered, for the love of one of us; we should be basely ungrateful, if we ever forgot his sufferings, and his love. What then must we think of ourselves, if we forget the unspeakable sufferings, and infinite love of the Son of God himself, nailed to a cross, to deliver us, by his death, from the eternal torments of hell? Ah! Christians let us never be so ungrateful.

Conclude O my soul, at this holy time at least, daily to accompany thy crucified Jesus by meditations on his sufferings. *With Christ I am nailed to the Cross,* said St. Paul, Gal. ii, 19. *My love is nailed to the Cross,* said St. Ignatius the Martyr. O that like these generous lovers, we could always adhere to our crucified God.

MONDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

On the great advantages of devotion to the passion of Christ.

CONSIDER first, that the consideration of the passion of Christ is the sovereign means of all good to Christian souls: *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the son of man be lifted up;* said our Lord to Nicodemus, John iii. 14, 15. *that whosoever believeth in him may not perish, but may have everlasting life.* As then the looking at the brazen serpent, (which was a figure of the death of Christ) was the means of divine appointment, to heal the Israélites, who were bitten by the fiery serpents, sent amongst them for their sins; and to rescue them from temporal death: so the contemplation of the passion of Christ, is the great means to heal Christian souls from the bites of the infernal serpent, and to deliver them from everlasting death. Every sinner that looks for mercy, must return to God with his whole heart, and that by faith, hope, love and repentance. Now it is in meditating on the passion of Christ, we contemplate the great object of our faith; the chiefest ground of our hope; the most pressing motive of divine love; and the strongest and most effectual inducement to repentance for our sins. O! let us embrace then this great means of bringing us to God, and to all good.

Consideredly, that as the belief of Christ crucified is the most fundamental article of the Christian's faith; so it has the greatest influence of all other articles on our justification: according to that of the Apostle, Rom. iii. 23, 24, 25. *that we all have sinned: and need the glory of God. Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath proposed to be A PROPITIATION THROUGH FAITH IN HIS BLOOD, &c.* It is then *through faith in his blood* we are to be introduced to the divine mercy: and it is by meditating on his passion we are to be introduced to a lively *faith in his blood.* So that the devotion to the passion of Christ is the shortest way to

come at justifying faith. It has no less influence on our hope, by setting before our eyes, how much God has loved us in giving his only Son; and the great grounds we have to look for all good through him. For as the Apostle writes, Rom. viii. 32. *He that spared not even his own Son: but delivered him up for us all, hath he not also with him given us all things?* O what an earnest indeed has God given us of mercy, grace and salvation, in the blood of his Son! O what may not poor sinners hope for, from such and so great a Redeemer; if they apply to his sacred passion, by daily meditations; and offer up their humble supplications to his Father, through him, and his infinite merits!

Consider 3dly, that as nothing contributes so effectually to our justification and sanctification, as the love of God: so nothing contributes more effectually to excite this heavenly love in our souls, than the devotion to the passion of Christ. For here we most clearly discover the incomprehensible goodness of God; and the inexhaustible treasures of his divine love for us. This excites in us a desire of returning love for love, life for life. This attracts us, like Magdalene, to the feet of our crucified Saviour, with an earnest desire to wash them with penitential tears, flowing from, and enlivened by divine love. This makes us grieve for our past ingratitude, in having had hitherto so little sense of his goodness and love; this makes us lament the share our sins have had in nailing him to the cross; this teaches us to offer our whole hearts to him, in order to make him the best amends we are capable of; by loving him henceforward, both in time, and eternity. Thus the devotion to the passion of Christ introduces that *penitential love*, to which our Lord attributes the remission of sins, when he says of Magdalene, Luke vii. 47. *Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much.*

Conclude to station thyself at the foot of the cross, and by the daily contemplation of the sufferings of thy Redeemer, so to exercise thy soul in faith, hope, love, and repentance; as to secure to thyself mercy, grace, and salvation.

TUESDAY,

TUESDAY, THIRD WEEK IN LENT.

On the lessons Christ teaches us in his passion.

CONSIDER first, that the devotion to the passion of our Lord, brings with it other great advantages to the soul; inasmuch as it teaches us many excellent lessons for the regulating our lives, according to his blessed example. The Son of God came down from heaven, not only to shed his blood for us, to pay our ransom: but also to give himself to us as a perfect pattern of all virtues, for us to follow in the practice of our lives: that so the image of God in man, which had been disfigured by sin, might be repaired and reformed according to this great original. Now although the whole life of Christ, was full of admirable examples of all Christian virtues; yet they no where shine forth more brightly than in his passion: in which he has drawn, as it were, under one view, all the great lessons of virtue, he had taught in his life, both by his words, and his works. So that the passion of Christ, is the great school, that the Christian must frequent by devout meditations, if he desires to learn the virtues of his Redeemer. He must look on by contemplation, and execute in work, what he sees in this great pattern, which his Lord here shews him, on Mount Calvary, if he desires to make his soul a living tabernacle for the living God. *As it was said to Moses, when he was to make the tabernacle of the covenant: See that thou make all things according to the pattern, which was shewn thee on the mount.* Heb. viii. 5.

Consider 2dly, what the lessons are, that Christ more particularly desires to teach us in his passion. The Apostle informs us, *Philip*, ii. 5, 8, that they are principally his *obedience* and his *humility*. *He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross:* and this, that we might learn to be of the like mind. O let us study well these great lessons. Adam fell from God by *disobedience*: to gratify himself, he transgressed the holy law of God; and so entailed both sin and death upon

upon all his offspring. By the *obedience* of the second Adam Jesus Christ, we are delivered from sin and death; but upon articles of learning and practising his *obedience*; and that also unto death; by a constant and perpetual will of sticking close to the commandments of God at all events; and of rather dying than transgressing his holy law. This is the *obedience*, that Christ expects we should learn from his Cross; *viz.* so as to be ever willing to part even with our dearest affections, rather than offend our God; and to submit to any sufferings whatsoever, rather than to disobey. This is true Christian *obedience*: and nothing less will bring us to God. My soul, thou must learn this lesson at the foot of the cross.

Consider 3dly, what a lesson of humility Christ has given us in the whole course of his passion: becoming therein, *as a worm, and no man; the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people*, Ps. xxi. 7. See how he humbled himself, under the malediction of our sins, in his prayer in the garden. How he humbled himself, in suffering with silence all manner of calumnies, affronts, and disgraces. How he humbled himself under those ignominious and infamous torments, of scourging at the pillar, crowning with thorns, and his carriage of the cross. In fine, how he humbled himself, in his being crucified between two thieves, and in dying that most disgraceful death of the cross. But who is this, my soul, that thus humbles himself, and makes himself thus mean and contemptible for thee? Why it is the Lord of glory: it is the most High: it is the great king of heaven and earth. And why does he thus debase himself? It is to teach thee his humility; a lesson so necessary, that without learning it thou canst never please God, nor have any part with him.

Conclude to study well these necessary lessons, by a daily attendance, upon our Lord in his passion. He came down from heaven to be our teacher: and his cross is the pulpit, from which he most feelingly and effectually preaches to our souls,

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN
LENT.

On other lessons, to be learnt from Christ in his passion.

CONSIDER first, that in the passion of Christ, his meekness is no less admirable than his humility. These two he jointly recommended in life, to be learnt of him, St. Matt. xi. 29. And these two he jointly taught in death, by his great example. *He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before his shearer he opened not his mouth.* Isai. liii. 7. *The Lord God hath opened my ear,* saith he Isai. l. 5. 6. *And I do not resist.*—*I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them:* I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me, and spit upon me. And why all this? But to leave us an example, that we should follow his steps, 1 Pet. ii. 21, 23. *Who when he was reviled did not revile:* when he suffered he threatened not: but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly. O let us learn from the consideration of the behaviour of our Lord in his sufferings, to suppress all the risings of our passion and pride, and to imitate his meekness and silence; who in the midst of affronts and injuries of all kinds, *became as a man that heareth not, and as a dumb man not opening his mouth.*

Consider 2dly, that the devotion to the passion of Christ, is the great means to learn a Christian *patience*, under all the crosses and sufferings we are exposed to during our mortal pilgrimage. We cannot live without crosses and sufferings; and *in our patience*, under them, we are to possess our souls, Luke xxi. 19. Patience both sweetens and sanctifies all our sufferings: *patience is necessary for us: that doing the will of God, we may receive the promise,* Heb. x. 36. *Patience hath a perfect work; that we may be perfect and entire, failing in nothing.* James i. 4. As none hath ever gone to heaven but by the way of the cross; so none can ever come thither without patience. Now this all necessary virtue

tue of patience is best learnt in the school of the passion of Christ; by the consideration of the multitude and variety of his sufferings; and the manner with which he endures all, for the love of us. How shall a sinner (who has deserved hell for his crimes) pretend to complain, or think much of any sufferings, in life, or death, when by serious meditations he sets before his eyes, the far greater sufferings of the innocent lamb of God, endured with an unwearied patience, for his sins!

Consider 3dly, what further lessons are to be learnt from the contemplation of the passion of Christ, 1. of charity for our enemies; by considering the Son of God, praying for them that crucified him, and dying for his enemies. 2. Of perfect resignation, and conformity in all things to the holy will of God: by the great example of the prayer of our Lord in his agony; *not my will but thine be done*; and the consideration of the great sacrifice, that he made of himself to his Father upon the cross, without the least reserve. 3. Of the spirit of voluntary mortification, and self-denial; by seeing how the Son of God allows himself no ease, or comfort in his sufferings; but both in life and death makes choice of what is most disagreeable to natural inclination. O my soul, these are necessary lessons indeed. See thou study them well at the foot of the cross; sitting under the shadow of thy beloved. O dear Jesus, do thou by thy internal grace teach me effectually these virtues; by that mercy and love, that nailed thee to the Cross.

Conclude, by loving and blessing thy God, for having sent thee so excellent a master from heaven, to teach thee the way thither, by his sufferings and death. Let these be always before thy eyes: and thou shalt never miss thy way.

THURSDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the love that Christ has shewn us, in his passion.

CONSIDER first, those words of our Saviour. St. John xv. 13. *Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* And indeed history scarce furnishes any instances of a friendship so perfect, as that one friend should be willing to lay down his life for another. But O divine Saviour of our souls how imperfect is all human friendship compared with thine! What love betwixt man and man could ever bear the least resemblance with that divine charity, which burnt in thy sacred breast, and which obliged thee to offer up thyself in sacrifice, in the midst of all kind of ignominies, and the very worst of torments, for thy very enemies; for those very wretches that crucified thee; for us miserable sinners, who were like to make no better return, for all thy love, and for all thy sufferings, than fin and ingratitude: and this to that degree as scarce ever to think of thy sufferings, or thank thee for them; but rather by repeated treasons, to be daily treading under foot thy precious blood. O blessed by all creatures, for evermore, be this infinite goodness, and love of our dearest Redeemer! O my dear Saviour, I beseech thee by all this love, and by all this precious blood, which thou hast so lovingly shed for me; that thou wouldest never more suffer me to be thus ungrateful to thee.

Consider 2dly, what the world would think of a prince, the only son and heirof some great monarch, who should entertain such love and friendship for one of the meanest of his slaves, as to offer himself to die a cruel and ignominious death, to rescue this slave from the just punishment of his crimes. Would not all mankind stand amazed at such an extraordinary love? And this much more, if the crime, for which this slave was condemned to die, were no less, than a treasonable conspiracy against this prince, by whom he was so tenderly beloved. Ah! Christian souls, this is but a faint resemblance; a very imperfect image, of that inconceivable and inexpressible

pressible love, which our Saviour has shewn to us, in laying down his life upon a cross, to rescue us his ungrateful creatures, rebels and traitors to him and his Father, from the eternal torments of hell, which we have a thousand times deserved by our treasons against him. For as there is an infinite distance between the sovereign majesty of God, and any of his creatures, how dignified soever; so there is between that love, which our God has shewn in dying for us worms of the earth, and slaves of hell, and that love which would oblige one mortal to die for another. O dear Jesus, never suffer me to forget this love, which thou hast shewn me! O give me grace to return thee love for love.

Consider 3dly, how truly *sweet*, our Lord has shewed himself to us, in his passion, and how *rich in mercy*. For supposing it was his pleasure to deliver us from sin and hell: he could have brought this about, with the same ease, with which he created all things out of nothing; one only word, one act of his would have been sufficient: or if he must needs suffer, and shed his blood for our redemption, one drop alone of his sacred blood, by reason of the infinite dignity of his divine person, would have been abundantly enough to atone for all the sins of ten thousand worlds. But this infinite love for us, and the desire he had to gain our hearts, and to oblige us to love him, would not be content with this, nor with any thing less, than with pouring out the last drop of his most sacred blood, by suffering for us the worst of torments, and the worst of deaths. O infinite goodness, how little art thou considered by us here? O how astonishing shalt thou appear to the Saints and Angels for all eternity!

Conclude with admiration at the ingratitude and insensibility of Christians, who make profession of believing this infinite goodness, mercy and love; and yet are so little touched with it; or restrained by the consideration of it, from going on, daily crucifying their Lord with their sins. O divine love, let me never be so unhappy! O let me never forget thee! O come and take full possession, at least, of my soul: and let nothing in life or death ever separate me from thee.

FRIDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Other considerations to excite in the soul the love of our suffering Jesus.

CONSIDER first, how *affectionate* is the love that Christ bears us in his passion. It is stronger than death: he loves us more than his own life; since he parts with his life for the love of us. It is more tender than the love of the tenderest mother; since, he voluntarily embraces the pangs of death to give us life: he sheds his blood to cleanse our souls from sin: he offers his own body in sacrifice, to be our victim, our ransom, and our food. At the very time he is suffering, and dying for us he has every one of us in his heart: he embraces each one with an incomparable affection; weeps over each one; prays for each one; and pours out his blood for each one; no less than if he had suffered for that one alone. O my soul, had we then a place in the heart of our Jesus, when he was hanging upon the cross: and shall we ever refuse him a place in our heart? No, dear Saviour, my heart is thine: it desires nothing better than to be for ever a servant of thy love.

Consider 2dly, how *effectual* is the love that Christ shews us in his passion; it contents not itself with words, or professions of affection, nor with such passing sentiments of tenderness, as we imagine we have for him, in certain fits of devotion, at times when nothing occurs for us to suffer for his sake: but it shews itself by its effects; by his taking upon himself all our evils, to procure effectually all good for us. His love has made him divest himself of all his *beauty* and *comeliness*; and hide all his glory and majesty; that he might become for us, *despised, and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity:* Isai, liii. *He hath torn our infirmities, and carried our sorrows,* out of pure love: He has made himself for the love of us *as it were a leper, and as one struck by God, and afflicted:* He was wounded for our iniquities, and bruised for our sins. *All we like sheep were gone astray---and the Lord laid on*

him the iniquity of us all. He was offered, because it was his own will. And it was his own will; because he loved us; and desired to transfer upon himself the punishment due to us; that he might deliver us from the wrath to come; and open to us the fountains of mercy, grace and life. This was an effectual love indeed. Does our love for him shew itself by the like effects? Are we willing to renounce our own wills, to mortify our inclinations and passions; to suffer, and to bear our crosses for him? A generous lover, is as willing to be with him on mount Calvary, as on mount Thabor: Is this our disposition?

Consider 3dly, how *disinterested* is the love that Christ shews us in his passion. He loves us without any merit on our side: we deserved nothing from him but hell. He loves us without any prospect of gain to himself from us, or any return that we can make to him: we can give him nothing but what he must first give us: we can offer him no good thing but what his love has purchased for us: we can have nothing but what is his. He stands in no need at all of us, or our goods. O how truly generous is this love of our Redeemer in his passion. How bountiful is he to us! He makes over to us the infinite treasures of his merits: he wants them not himself; but bequeaths them all to us. His love for us knows no bounds. It hath possessed his heart from the first instant of his conception; it burned there for every moment of his life; it carried him through all his sufferings, even to death. It is without beginning, or end; it endures from eternity to eternity, O bright fire, mayest thou take possession of my soul, for time and eternity.

Conclude since thou canst make no better return, to offer at least daily thy heart with all its affections to thy loving Saviour. But that it may be worthy of his acceptance; beg that he would cleanse it by his precious blood, and inflame it with his love,

SATURDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

On the sufferings of our Saviour before his passion.

CONSIDER first, how true that is, of the devout author of the Following of Christ. *The whole life of Christ was a cross and a martyrdom.* He came into this world to be a victim for our sins; and from the first instant of his conception in his mother's womb, he offered himself to all the sufferings he was to undergo in life and death. Hear how he then addresses himself to his Father. Ps. xxxix. 7. 8. *Sacrifice and oblation thou didst not desire: but thou hast pierced ears for me. Burnt-offering and sin-offering thou didst not require: then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of me, that I should do thy will: O my God, I have desired it, and thy law in the midst of my heart.* And what was this will, and this law, which from his first conception he embraced in the midst of his heart? But that instead of all other sacrifices, he should become himself both our priest and victim, and through his sufferings, should mediate our peace, and reconcile us to his Father. Thus he accepted before-hand all that he was afterwards to endure: and by the clear and distinct foresight, which he had all along, of his whole passion, suffered in some measure all his life time, what afterwards he endured at his death. O how early did my Jesus embrace his cross for the love of me! O how early did I prefer my pleasures before his love.

Consider 2dly, diverse other sufferings, which our Lord went through in the course of his mortal life. His nine months confinement in his mother's womb: most sensible to him, who from his first conception had the perfect use of reason; and who by a violence, which he offered to his zeal and love, was kept so long from action. The hardships he endured at his birth, from the rigour of the season; and the poverty of his accommodations: his circumcision; his flight into Egypt; the sense that he had of the murder of the Innocents; the austerity of his life; his frequent hunger,

thirst and want of necessaries, his labours and fatigues. But all this was nothing to what his boundless charity, and his zeal for the honour of his Father and the salvation of souls, made him continually suffer, from the sight and knowledge of the sins of men. He had all the sins of the world always before his eyes, for the whole time of his life, with all their enormity, and opposition to the infinite majesty and sanctity of God, and his divine honour and glory; and the dreadful havock they did, and would make in the souls of men, with all the dismal consequences of them both in time and eternity: and this sight which was always present to him, was infinitely more grievous to his soul, than the very pangs of death. For if St. Paul had such a sense of the evil of sin, as to be quite on fire when he saw any one fall into sin, 2 Cor. xi. 29. how much more did this fire devour our Saviour.

Consider 3dly, how much our Lord suffered from being obliged to live and converse amongst men, whose manners were so widely different from, and so infinitely opposite to his: how sensibly he was touched with the crying disorders of the people of the Jews, amongst whom he lived; with their malice, their violences, their injustices, their deceits, their blasphemies, and the licentiousness of their lives: the pride, ambition, covetousness, and hypocrisy of their priests, scribes, and Pharisees; the oppressions of the poor, their contempt of virtue and of truth, and their general forgetfulness of God and their salvation. Add to this, how sensibly he must have been afflicted with the hardness of their hearts, with which they resisted his graces; their obstinacy in their evil ways; their ingratitude; the opposition they made to his heavenly Gospel; their blasphemous judgments of his person and miracles; their flanders and murmurings against him; and their continually laying snares for him, and persecuting him, even unto death. O who can sufficiently apprehend how much our Saviour's soul was affected with all these evils; with this reception and treatment he met with from his chosen people; and with those dreadful judgments they

They were thereby drawing down upon their own heads instead of that mercy, which he came to purchase for them by his blood! Death itself was not so sensible to him.

Conclude, if thou wouldest be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, to conform thyself to a life of crosses and sufferings: thus shalt thou wear his livery; and shalt be entitled to a share in his heavenly kingdom. *If we suffer with him, we shall reign with him.* Yet so, if we suffer with his spirit.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

On our Saviour's prayer in the garden.

CONSIDER first, that our Saviour's passion began the night before his death: when, after having eaten the paschal lamb with his disciples, humbly washed their feet, instituted the great passover of the new covenant, and given them, in an admirable sacrament of love, his own most precious body and blood; he went out with them to mount Olivet: the place to which he was accustomed to resort, after the preaching and labours of the day, to spend the evening, if not the whole night, in prayer. Hither he went, on this his last night, to prepare himself for his passion, by prayer; not for any need he had of it for himself; but to give us an example, and for our instruction. O learn, my soul, by this great example, how thou art to arm thyself against all trials and temptations! Learn from whence all thy strength is to come, in the time of battle. Give ear to what our Lord said to his disciples upon this occasion, *Matt. xxvi. 41. Watch ye, and pray, that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.* O take heed, lest if thou sleep, as Peter did, when thou shouldest pray, thou deny thy Lord, when thou comest to the trial!

Consider 2dly, how our Saviour begins to disclose to his disciples, the mortal anguish, fear, and sadness, which he then suffered in his soul. *My soul, saith he, is sorrowful, even unto death:* that is to say, with a sadness,

which is capable of even now taking away my life, if I did not, by miracle, support myself, for enduring the other torments of my passion. Sweet Jesus, what can be the meaning of this! Didst thou not, from the first instant of life, accept of, and embrace, in the midst of thy heart, all that thou art now going to suffer; forasmuch as it would be for the glory of thy Father, and the redemption of man? Hadst thou not even a longing desire of accomplishing this great sacrifice of our redemption? And how comes it that thou art now thus oppressed with sadness and anguish? Where is that courage and fortitude, which thou hast imparted to thy martyrs; which has made even tender maids despise the worst of torments, when they endured them for the love of thee? And shalt thou, who art the strength of the martyrs, shrink at the fear of death? But O! I very well understand, that it is by thy own choice thou hast condescended to all this sadness, fear, and anguish; it is to the end that thou mightest suffer the more for me, and engage me to love thee the more; it is that thou mightest teach me how to behave under all my interior anguishes and afflictions, and how to endure them, for the love of thee.

Consider godly, the prayer our Saviour made on this occasion, that, if it were agreeable to the will of his Father, the bitter cup might pass away from him. But O with what fervour did he pray? *With a strong cry and tears*, Heb. v. 7. With what reverence and humility? Lying prostrate upon the ground, Matt. xxvi. 39. With what earnestness and perseverance? Continuing a long time in prayer; and repeating again and again the same supplication. Learn, my soul, to imitate him: under all thy distresses, betake thyself to prayer: but see thou pray, as thy Lord did, with fervour, humility, and perseverance: see thou pray with the like resignation: *Not my will but thine be done*. Remember that in thy prayers thou art not to seek thy own pleasure or comfort, but the holy will of God: O make his holy will thy comfort and pleasure, and thy prayer will be always accepted. *Stay you here and watch with me*, said our Lord

to his disciples: but at every time that he came to them, he found them still asleep; and no help or comfort had he from their company, in this his desolate condition. O my soul, do thou at least, pity thy Saviour under all his anguish and desolation: Do thou stay and watch with him, by a frequent meditation on his sufferings.

Conclude never to forget what thy Saviour suffered for thee in his soul, during his prayer in the garden. No sufferings can be greater than such as immediately affect the soul. St. Teresa did not let a night pass, from her very childhood, without reflecting, before she fell asleep, on our Saviour's sufferings in that part of his passion: and, by this means, she gradually arrived at the perfection of mental prayer, and of all holiness. Do thou the like.

MONDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Saviour's agony and bloody sweat.

CONSIDER first, what pangs, what anguish, what floods of sorrow, overwhelmed the soul of our dear Redeemer, during his prayer in this his last night. Alas! no tongue can sufficiently express, nor heart conceive them! However, that thou mayest make some sort of judgment of them, from their effects, consider how they cast him into a mortal agony; how they forced from all his body a wonderful sweat of blood; which not only embrued all his garments, but also trickled down from his body upon the ground, on which he lay prostrate in prayer. O how inconceivable a torture must he have endured in his interiour; when the pangs of his soul had such a strong operation exterioirly, and produced such strange effects in the body! But why all this agony, dear Lord? Why these pangs! Why this prodigious sweat of blood? Was not the death of the cross sufficient for our redemption? Why then these anticipated sorrows? Thy love alone can account for them. O blessed be thy infinite charity!

Consider

Consider 2dly, how bitter were the ingredients of this chalice, which our Saviour so much dreaded to drink. Ah! my soul, they were bitter indeed: he had at this time before his eyes a most lively apprehension, a most clear and express representation of all and every particular injury and indignity, stripe and torment, that he was afterwards successively to endure, in the whole course of his passion, now all at once assaulting his soul, and making him feel beforehand all the sorrows, which afterwards only came one by one. But what was far more terrible to our Saviour, was the clear sight, and lively sense he had then of all the sins and abominations of the whole world, from the first to the last, with all their filthiness and horror, all now laid upon him, as if they were his own; and himself like the *emissary goat*, *Levit. vi. 21.* charged with all the maledictions due to them, and with the wrath of his Father, justly enkindled by them. Sweet Jesus, any one of these monsters is more odious to thee than hell. And how then must thou be affected, when thou not only hast before thy eyes, this infinite number of millions of millions, of these odious monsters, mortal enemies of thy Father, mustered up all against thee; but also feelest their enormous weight, laid upon thy shoulders? O what a share had my sins in this tragical scene! how did they oppress the soul of my Redeemer! how did they force from him this shower of blood; as if all the pores of his body were turned into eyes, to weep for my sins! O! let thy agony and bloody sweat, teach me effectually how heinous my sins are in thy eyes; and in what manner I ought to bewail them!

Consider 3dly, another bitter ingredient of that cup of thy Redeemer, which was the foresight he then had of the little sense the greatest part even of Christians would have of all his sufferings; of their ingratitude for his infinite charity; of their abuse of all those graces he was going to purchase for them, with the last drop of his blood; of their perverseness in taking occasion from his very passion to sin more freely, and to draw down the more dreadful judgments upon their own heads: and,

and, in fine, of the eternal loss of innumerable souls, who, notwithstanding all his sufferings, through their obstinacy in sin, and final impenitence, would incur the second and everlasting death. Consider that every one of these poor souls was more dear to Christ than his own life, since he parted with his life to save them. What a cruel anguish then must it have been to his tender and charitable heart, to see so many of them blindly and wilfully running into the bottomless pit of endless and irremediable evils, and plunging themselves for ever into the flames of hell. No wonder, after this, that so many lamentable objects, presenting themselves at once, before the eyes of his soul, and joined with all those mentioned in the foregoing consideration, should cast him into a mortal agony and bloody sweat.

Conclude to admire and adore the wondrous ways of God, in bringing about the redemption of man. Embrace, with all the affections of thy heart, the infinite charity of thy Redeemer, which shines forth so bright in this mystery. And see thou be no longer one of that unhappy number, who repay all his mercy and love with sin and ingratitude.

TUESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On the treason of Judas.

CONSIDER first, how sensible an affliction it was to our Lord to be betrayed and sold by one of his own apostles, into the hands of those that fought his life. Insomuch that he, who bore in silence all the insolencies of the Jewish rabble, and the pagan soldiers; he who suffered the whips, thorns, and nails, without complaint; could not but complain of this treachery, ingratitude, and perfidiousness of a false friend; both in his words to his disciples, the night before his passion, and to the traitor himself, when he offered him the treacherous kiss; and long before by the royal prophet. Hear how he expresses himself in the psalms. *Even the man of my peace* (the friend whom I had taken into my bosom) *in whom I trusted, who ate my bread* (even the bread of life) *hath*

Kath greatly supplanted me, Ps. xl. 10. and again, If my enemy had reviled me, I would verily have born with it: and if he that hated me had spoken great things against me, I would perhaps have hid myself from him. But thou a man of one mind, my guide and my familiar, who didst take sweet meats together with me, (even the sacred body and blood of thy Redeemer) in the house of God we walked with consent: Ps. liv. 13, 14. Yes, I had associated thee to the communion of all my goods and graces in my church; I had admitted thee to be one of my individual companions, a witness of all my doctrine and miracles, and even one of my twelve apostles. And that thou, so highly favoured, without any merit of thine, should be thus ungrateful, thus false and perfidious, as without any injury or provocation, for a petty trifling interest, to betray me into the hands of my enemies, and to join thyself with them to persecute me unto death! O this it is that afflicts my soul! And the more insupportably, because, in betraying and selling me, thou betrayest and sellest thy own soul, (which is so dear to me) to be an eternal prey to devils. O take care, my soul, thou never imitate the traitor! O dear Jesuſ, be thou my keeper, or else I ſhall also betray both myſelf and thee! Alas! how often have I betrayed thee already, by wilful ſin? O never ſuffer me to be ſo miſerable any more!

Consider 2dly, what an aggravation it was to the injury which the traitor offered to our Redeemer, that he ſhould ſet no greater value on him; but ſell him at ſo low a rate as thirty pieces of silver, the price, it is likely, of the meanest ſlave: and that he ſhould prefer ſuch a trifling conſideration before his Lord and his God, who made both him and all things; and who ſet ſuch a value upon his ſoul, as to employ his whole life and death, and give his own moſt precious blood to redeem it. My ſoul, doſt thou not loudly condemn and deteſt this monſtrous treason? But haſt thou never been guilty of the like or worse? Haſt thou never ſold, for a more trifling conſideration, the grace and friendſhip of thy Redeemer? Haſt thou never preferred, before him, a

petty

petty interest, a filthy pleasure, a puntilio of honour, or the gratifying some unreasonable passion? And what was all this but selling both thy God, and thy own soul, for something of less value than the traitor's thirty pieces of silver? Alas! it is what thou hast been guilty of, as often as thou has committed mortal sin. Be confounded, repent, and amend.

Consider 3dly, and see, in this example of Judas, that no state of life, or calling, how holy soever, can secure us from danger: since an apostle, called by Christ, and trained up in his school; so well instructed by his heavenly doctrine, and great examples; and empowered by him to cast out devils, and work wonderful miracles, is fallen nevertheless, and fallen so as to rise no more, even into the bottomless pit. O! let him that stands be sensible upon what slippery ground he stands, and by whose grace he is supported, and kept from falling: that so, by distrusting entirely in himself, and placing his whole confidence in God, he may work out his salvation with fear and trembling. But what was it that brought Judas to this enormous treason! It was the love of money. This was his predominant passion. This he indulged at first in lesser injustices, by the opportunity of carrying the common purse: and thus, whilst he took no care to mortify his evil inclinations, by degrees, they gained ground upon him, till they introduced Satan into the full possession of his soul: and so prevailed upon him to betray and to sell his master, and then to hang himself in despair. Christians, beware of your passions; stifle them betimes; lest they grow headstrong, by being neglected in the beginning. Especially take care of that cheating vice of the love of money, the source of innumerable evils; and yet the poison works so insensibly, that few or none are willing to think themselves infected with it. Alas! how many pretexts and pretences are made use of to cloak the evil: how many ways of palliating even frauds, injustices, usuries, and what not. And how ingenious are men, where their interest is concerned, to persuade themselves that their way is right,

right, the latter end of which (as they will find to their cost, when it is too late) leads to the second death.

Conclude to mistrust thyself, and thy own judgment, in all cases, where thy worldly honour, interest; or pleasure, is concerned; because it is natural, on these occasions, to be biased to that side of the question that is most agreeable to self-love. O how hard it is to be an impartial judge in one's own case! But O! how happy then are they, that, in simplicity of heart, seek God, and his holy will and law, on all occasions: and do not desire to bend down the law of God to their will, but their will to the law of God!

WEDNESDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On the apprehension of our Lord.

CONSIDER first, how our Saviour rising up from the ground, where he had lain prostrate in prayer, all embued in his own blood, which he shed during his anguish and agony, goes for the third time to his disciples, whom he had desired to pray, and to watch with him; but alas he finds them still asleep. So little comfort did they afford their Lord in his distress! O my soul, has not this been often thy case, to be unconcernedly sleeping, when it behoved thee to be watching and praying with thy Saviour? And what has been the consequence of this? Why thou hast run away, and hast abandoned him, in the time of trial and temptation. But now, by this time, the traitor, who was not asleep, has conducted to the place a multitude, headed by some of the priests and Pharisees, and armed with swords and clubs, to apprehend our Lord. See, my soul, how thy Saviour goes forth to meet them; how ready he is to suffer; how willing to deliver himself up for the love of thee: See in what manner he receives the traitor's kiss; *my friend, says he, to what end art thou come hither?* Reflect what thou art about, and repent whilst thou hast time; and will shew thee mercy; *Judas wilt thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?* O the meekness and charity of our Redeemer; who is ready to receive with open

open arms even Judas himself, if his hardened heart had not been proof against all the charms of his mercy! Sinners, see what an encouragement we have to run to him for mercy, since he was desirous to shew it even to the traitor himself.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord was pleased, on this occasion, to manifest his power; by casting down to the ground all that armed multitude, that were come to apprehend him, with these only words, *I am he:* to shew the world that no power of man could apprehend him, but by his own will and consent; in consequence of his own free love: O blessed be that free love for evermore! On the same occasion, when Malchus a servant of the high-priest, more busy than the rest in apprehending our Saviour, had his ear cut off by the sword of Peter; our Lord not only restrained this apostle from using any further violence in his defence; but instantly shewed, both his power, and his goodness, in healing the wretch, and restoring his ear upon the spot, by his only word: to teach us by his example to overcome evil with good. Then after having meekly expostulated with the priests and the Pharisees, for their coming out in this manner in the night, with an armed mob, to take him, as if he had been some highway robber, he gave them leave to use their pleasure with him; but this, upon condition, that they should not meddle with any of his disciples. So solicitous was our dear Redeemer that none of his little ones should suffer anything, upon his occasion, whilst he was going to offer up himself in sacrifice for the love of them.

Consider 3dly, that our Lord had no sooner delivered himself up, with these words, *This is your hour, and the power of darkness;* but they immediately rush in upon him; and, as we may presume from the rest of their carriage, and from their hatred to him, load him with injuries and blasphemies. Then they bind him fast, as if he were some notorious criminal; and drag him violently along with them in the dark, into the city. See, my soul, and contemplate the meekness, patience, and silence of the lamb of God, under all these outrages:

accompany him in spirit upon this occasion; (for his apostles have all left him, in the hands of his enemies) and strive to enter into his interieur, and to learn from the secret conversation he has all the while with his Father, from the prayer he is there making for his enemies, and from the charity with which he offers up both his present and future sufferings, for thy sins, and for the sins of the whole world, what ought to be thy dispositions under all the sufferings thou meetest with; what thy interieur exercises of devotion; and what thy spirit of charity for them that afflict thee, and persecute thee.

Conclude to follow thy Saviour in spirit, through all the different stages of his passion; with a sincere desire to study and learn the great lessons he teaches thee in his sufferings; and withal to make the best return of love thou art able, for the infinite love he has shewn thee, in suffering so much for the love of thee.

THURSDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Lord's being brought before Annas and Caiphas.

CONSIDER first, how the rabble that had apprehended our Saviour, having dragged him into the city with loud shouts, and cries, brought him first before Annas, one of the chief priests, to give him the pleasure of seeing their prisoner, and of insulting over him. Go in, my soul, with him, and see the Son of God, the judge of the living and the dead, standing with his hands tied behind him, before this insolent Jewish priest. Hear the impertinent questions he puts to him, concerning his disciples and his doctrine; and admire the courage, meekness, and evenness of soul, which thy Saviour shews in his whole comportment on this occasion. See how he suffers even a vile servant, not only to rebuke him in words, for his modest and just answer; but also to strike him on the face before all the company; An affront, which, if offered to the meanest of men, would be thought insupportable, by the children of this world; but our great master has taught us, both by word and example, that true courage consists in bearing, and

and not in revenging injuries. And surely nothing can be more honourable to a Christian than to walk in the footsteps of his king, and to keep his laws.

Consider 2dly, how our Saviour, bound as he was, is hurried away, with the like shouts and insolencies, from Annas to the house of Caiphas the high priest, where the senate, or council, was assembled; determined to destroy him right or wrong: and therefore, notwithstanding it was now late at night, they immediately proceed to his trial; and to the examining the witnesses, of whom they had provided a good store, to depose against this innocent lamb of God. Christians, what shall we most admire on this occasion; the malice of the enemies of our Saviour, and the gross falsehoods they impose upon him; or the force of truth, and the wonderful innocence of our Lord, which would not suffer their testimonies to be of any weight against him, even in the judgment of so partial, and so wicked a court. But what is the most admirable of all is that invincible meekness and patience, that perfect peace and tranquillity of soul, with which our Lord suffered in silence, to hear himself charged by these wicked impostors, with so many false crimes, tending to rob him both of his honour and his life! O surely one must be more than man to be silent on such occasions. Learn at least thou, my soul, from this silence of thy Saviour, not to be so excessively nice with regard to thy honour: and if thou must speak in defence of thy own innocence, see thou do it with that calmness and modesty that becomes a disciple of such a master. A noisy and passionate defence will only make thy cause worse; and will rob thee of thy peace, which is a more valuable good, than any thing the world can either give, or take away.

Consider 3dly, how the high priest, finding that his evidence did not agree in their story, stood up, and adjured our Saviour by the living God, to tell them if he was indeed the Christ, the Son of God? Our Lord, in reverence to his Father's name, and to give testimony to that capital truth, the great foundation of the Christian religion, which he came to seal with his blood; im-

mediately answered, that he was; and that hereafter they should see him, sitting on the right hand of God, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Christians, give thanks to your Saviour for this solemn profession of what he was; though standing now in the midst of enemies, determined not to believe him. They rejected and condemned this grand truth to their own condemnation; do you embrace and adore it for your salvation. Upon this open declaration of his divinity, the high priest rends his garments and cries out *blasphemy*: and they all, with one voice, condemn him to death. See, my soul, the Saint of Saints traduced now as a blasphemer; and the author of life judged worthy of death; and this by the whole council of the priests and ancients of his people; and learn thou henceforward not to be so much concerned about the judgment of the world: if it condemns thee wrongfully; what wonder, since it has condemned Christ himself. He was innocence itself, whereas thy sins deserve other kinds of punishment than the world can condemn thee to.

Conclude, in opposition to this unjust sentence given against the Lamb of God, to join with all the heavenly spirits, and with all the elect of God, in that solemn canticle, Apoc. v. 12. *The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction.* But learn withal, from his great example, when thou art called to the trial, never to be ashamed of him, nor his truth; though thou wert even to lay down thy life, with him, and for him.

FRIDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On our Saviour's treatment in the house of Caiphas.

CONSIDER first, how this sentence of condemnation was no sooner pronounced against our Lord, than the whole multitude of them began to fall upon him, and to treat him with all kind of outrages, and unheard of barbarity. *They spit in his face and buffet him,* St. Matt. xxvi. 67. *They blindfold him, and smite his*

his face, and ask him, saying; Prophesy, who is it that struck thee? St. Luke xxiii. 64. They pluck his hair and beard, whilst he with his hands tied behind him, makes no resistance, but as he tells us, Isai. l. 5. 6. gives up his body to them that strike him, and his cheeks to them that pluck them, and turns not away his face from them that rebuke him, and spit upon him. Not to speak of many other shameful abuses and injuries: so that here he is treated indeed as a worm and no man: the reproach of men, and the outcast of the people. Ps. xxi. Here, as the prophet foretold, Lament. iii. 30. he is filled with reproaches. See my soul, what the Son of God has willingly submitted to, to save thee from sin and hell. O! embrace that infinite charity of his, which has made him stoop so low, that he might take thee up from the dunghill, and place thee with him on his throne: But O! detest thy sins, which have so often buffeted him, and spit in his face.

Consider 2dly, what kind of a night our Saviour passed in the hands of the rabble, after the council was broke up, and the priests and ancients had retired to rest. These brutish men, instigated by the example of their masters, and by those wicked spirits that possessed them, would not suffer our Lord to take any rest, during that last night of his mortal life: but continued acting over and over again the same tragedy, by mocking, beating, and abusing the Lord of glory, and discharging their filthy phlegm on his sacred face: whilst he has no hand at liberty, nor friend, to ward off any of their blows; nor any one so much as to wipe their filthy spittle off from his face, all bruised and quite disfigured with their buffets. Ah! who shall be able to recount one half of what our Saviour suffered that night from these wretches. Besides all the reproaches, slanders, curses and blasphemies, with which they loaded him, more intolerable than their blows. Many other things, says St. Luke, chap. xxii. 65. they said against him, blaspheming; whilst he all the while replied not a word: when he was reviled, he did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not, 1 Peter ii. 23. but delivered

himself, not only to him that judged him unjustly, but also to these vile wretches, that so shamefully abused him at their pleasure. Be astonished O ye heavens, to see your Lord and maker, treated in this outrageous manner, by the vilest of men! But alas! my soul, they were thy sins that were the chief actors in all this tragedy. O! repent and amend.

Consider 3dly, and set before thy eyes the image of thy Saviour in the hands of these miscreants: take a view of his face all bruised; his eyes black and blue; his whole countenance disfigured, so that no one of his heavenly features can now be distinguished; his forehead and cheeks defiled with their spittle: his beard plucked; his hair all rent and torn; and his whole person strangely metamorphosed. Then reflect who this is that suffers all this? And for whom? How freely he suffers, all by his own choice? And what lessons he gives thee in his sufferings? And thou wilt find abundant matter for thy meditation. But carry the eyes of thy soul still further, and look into his interiour; and see the peace and tranquillity that reigns there, in the midst of all these sufferings; from his perfect conformity to the will of his Father: see how he prays for his enemies: see the joy with which he suffers, in consideration of the greater glory of his Father, and of our salvation, which he is to purchase by all these his sufferings.

Conclude with admiration and love of the infinite charity of thy Redeemer: and a resolution of imitating his patience, his meekness, his humility, and his conformity in all things to his Father's will.

SATURDAY, FOURTH WEEK IN LENT.

On Peter's Denial.

CONSIDER first, that amongst all the sufferings of that last night of our Saviour's life, nothing went so much to his heart, as the behaviour of his own apostles: one of them betrayed him; all of them abandoned him; and Peter the very chiefest of them all, who had

had been the most favoured by his master, and who upon all occasions had professed the greatest zeal and love for him, thrice denied that he knew him. O my soul pity thy Saviour thus forsaken by all his friends. Hear his complaints: *I looked on my right hand, and beheld, and there was no one that would know me, Flight hath perished from me: and there is no one that hath regard to my soul*, Pl. cxli. 5. And again: *Friend and neighbour thou hast put away far from me, and my acquaintance because of misery*, Pl. lxxxvii. 19. But what was it that could induce Peter, to deny his Lord and master; who a little while before had drawn his sword, to defend him against an armed multitude, and had cut off the ear of the man that offered to lay hands on him: and who had boasted that very night, that though all the rest should forsake him, he would always adhere to him; that he was ready to go with him to prison and to death; and that though he were to die for it, he would never deny him? What was it? Alas the voice of a poor maid, putting the question to him, if he were not one of his disciples? put him in such a terror, that he not only denied, but even swore, and cursed himself: if ever he knew the man! Good Jesus! What is man? What is he not capable of, if thou support him not by thy grace? O look well to me, Lord, and stand by me; or I shall also deny thee.

Consider 2dly, how Peter came to fall so quickly, after such strong resolutions, and so much zeal for his master. Alas! he depended too much upon his resolutions: he did not sufficiently know himself; he thought himself stronger than his companions, and built too much upon his own strength: and this secret presumption was the chief cause of his fall. Ah! my soul, beware of any confidence in thyself: thou art never nearer falling, than when thou seemest to have the strongest resolutions; if thy resolutions are built upon thy own sandy bottom, and not upon the rock, which is Christ. Peter slept, when he was admonished to watch and to pray, lest he should fall in the time of temptation: this neglect was another occasion of his sin; by depriving him

him of that grace, which otherwise would have effectually preserved him. See, my soul, if thy frequent falls be not owing to thy neglect of watching and praying. In fine, Peter was too rash in exposing himself to the danger, by going into the company of the enemies of our Saviour, and giving ear to their discourses; which so far influenced him as to make him ashamed of his master. Beware lest the like causes should have the like effects in thee. Beware of bad company, and of all such conversation, as may make thee ashamed of Christ, or his maxims; or any ways influence thee to the prejudice of thy soul.

Consider 3dly, in Peter's three denials, how easily one fall draws on another, and generally speaking, a deeper: and learn from hence the necessity of a speedy repentance. Alas! Peter now fallen, as he passed over unregarded the crowing of the cock, so might have continued in his sin, and died in his sin too, had not his loving Redeemer, in the midst of all the outrages he was suffering, cast an eye of pity upon him; and touching his heart at the same time with a strong and efficacious grace, sent him out from the wicked company he was in, to weep bitterly in private for his sins: a practice, which he is said ever after to have retained, as often as he heard the cock crowing. Bless thy Lord, my soul, for the mercy he shewed to this apostle. Learn to imitate him, by a ready correspondence with divine grace, when it invites thee to go out from Babylon, the society of the wicked, and to weep bitterly for thy sins. But O! content not thyself with short passing acts of repentance, but if thou wouldest be secure, bewail thy sins, like St. Peter, as long as thou livest.

Conclude to be always upon thy guard: and if thou seemest to thyself to stand, take heed lest thou fall. Thou hast not half the strength that Peter had: be not then high-minded, but fear. Humility is thy best security.

PASSION-SUNDAY.

On our Lord's being led away to Pilate.

CONSIDER first, how the high priest, and his fellows in iniquity, (notwithstanding their late sitting up at night) very early in the morning convene a more numerous assembly of the sanhedrim, or great council, to carry on and to bring to execution their wicked designs against the Son of God. Alas! how often are the children of this world more industrious in rising early to wickedness, than the servants of God to advance his glory, and their own eternal salvation! Here our Lord is again brought before them: and the question is put to him again: *Art thou Christ the Son of God?* And upon his answering again in the affirmative, they all renew their former sentence, and declare him worthy of death. But see the depth of the malice of these unhappy men against the Lord of life; which will not suffer them to be content, with putting him to death privately; or with stoning him, as they afterwards did St. Stephen; or with any other ordinary death: but they must needs have him die upon a cross; as being the most disgraceful, and at the same time the most cruel of all deaths: and therefore, as they could not of their own authority inflict this kind of death, they determined to deliver him up to Pilate the Governor, in order to his being crucified by him. See what envy and malice is capable of, when once it has taken possession of the soul. But remember withal that their envy and malice could not make the Son of God suffer any thing more, than what his infinite charity had freely made choice of, to suffer for the love of thee. Blessed be that infinite charity for evermore, which has freely chosen so disgraceful and so cruel a death, for our redemption from sin and hell!

Consider 2dly, the manner of their conducting our Lord to Pilate, through the streets lined with an immense multitude of people, assembled at Jerusalem upon occasion of the paschal solemnity. Hear how they publish

publish, all the way as they go, that now they had found him to be a cheat, and a hypocrite; had discovered all his impostures; and convicted him, by his own confession, of blasphemy; and therefore had condemned him to die. See how the people, who a little while before reverenced him as a prophet, are now all changed in his regard, and join with his enemies. O see what a wretched figure he makes in their hands, after the treatment he had received in the night: See how his enemies take occasion from thence to triumph, and to insult over him: and how his friends grow cold, and are ashamed of him. O my soul, do thou at least follow thy Lord, with compassion and love, in these his last ways, that he walks for thy redemption: painful and humble ways indeed, and quite opposite to the ways the world is fond of, and distasteful to flesh and blood: But O how wholesome, to all such souls as willingly embrace them, and follow them, in the company of Jesus Christ!

Consider 3dly, how the high priest, and the rest of the council, being come to Pilate's house, made a scruple of going in, for fear of contracting a legal uncleanness, that might disqualify them from partaking of the sacrifices, that were offered on that day; it being the very day of the feast of the Passover, celebrated in memory of their redemption from the bondage of Egypt. And yet, unhappy men, whilst they scruple going into the house of a Gentile, for fear of an uncleanness, that could only reach the body, they are not afraid of polluting their souls, with the most heinous of all crimes, and profaning thereby the greatest of all their solemnities. But what are not men capable of, when they suffer themselves to be hurried away by their passions! But see the wonderful providence of God! Whilst they on their part are so bent upon their wickedness, that no other day will serve their turn but the very day of their sacrificing the paschal lamb: without thinking, or designing it, they are concurring, as instruments, to bring about the merciful designs of God, for the redemption of the whole world, by the sacrifice of the true

true paschal Lamb, on that same day, of which, their yearly passover was an illustrious figure.

Conclude to beware of thy passions; which, if indulged, are capable of blinding thee to that degree, as to pervert the greatest good into evil. And on the other side, embrace and love the wonderful ways of divine providence, which so often draws the greatest good out of the greatest evils.

MONDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

Our Lord is sent from Pilate to Herod.

CONSIDER first, how Pilate going out, to enquire what accusation they brought against our Saviour, these children of iniquity made no scruple of laying many notorious untruths to his charge; such as raising seditions, stirring up the people to rebellion, forbidding tribute to be paid to the emperor, and treasonably giving himself out for the king of the Jews. Under all these wicked flanders, that tended to nothing less than procuring his condemnation to the worst of deaths, our Lord still shewed the same peace and tranquility of soul, and still kept silence, to the great astonishment of the governor. Admirable lessons for Christians! to learn to possess their souls at least in patience, if they cannot be wholly silent, under calumnies and detractions; and to learn that calmness and meekness will be a better proof and defence of their innocence, than passion and rage, or returning injury for injury. We see here that Pilate himself, though otherwise a wicked man, was so far from interpreting our Saviour's silence, joined with that tranquillity of soul, for an acknowledgement of his guilt, that he concluded it to be an argument of his innocence: and clearly perceived in the Jews way of acting, that they were carried on by envy and passion, and not by zeal for justice; and therefore after inquiring of our Lord concerning his being king; and understanding from him, that his *kingdom was not of this world*; and therefore no way prejudicial to Cæsar's authority;

authority; he declared himself fully satisfied, and sought to discharge him.

Consider 2dly, how the Jews still urging to have our Lord condemned, Pilate, to get rid of their importunity, sends him away to Herod, king of Galilee, as one of his subjects, and refers his cause to him. Follow thy Saviour, O my soul, in this new stage; and admire the serenity of his countenance, and the peace of his soul, whilst he is hurried through the streets, in the midst of an insulting mob, and loaded with reproaches and injuries. See how he is brought in bonds before that prince; attended by the whole council; who there renew all their false accusations against him: whilst Herod, who is overjoyed to see him, in hopes of being eye-witness of some miracle, puts a thousand idle questions to him. But our Lord is silent still; and neither takes any notice of the falsities laid to his charge by his accusers; nor seeks to gratify the vain curiosity of Herod; or to do any thing that might incline him to set him at liberty. No, my soul, thy Saviour has too great a love for thee, to work a miracle to deliver himself from that death, which he so gladly embraces as the only means to give thee life. Blessed by all creatures be his goodness for ever.

Consider 3dly, how Herod, provoked with our Lord's not consenting to gratify his inclinations of seeing a miracle, revenges himself on him by treating him with mockery and scorn; exposes him to the scoffs of all his soldiers; and orders him to be cloathed in contempt with a white garment, as with a fool's coat, or as a mock-king: and, in this garb, sends him back again to Pilate, attended as before, with the priests and scribes, and an insulting rabble, taking fresh occasion of abusing him, from his disgraceful habit. See here, my soul, with astonishment, the eternal Wisdom of the Father, treated by the world as a fool; see the great king of heaven and earth abused as a mock-king, and an idle pretender to royalty. And learn from hence not to be solicitous about the judgment of the world; nor to repine, if they charge thee with folly: for why shouldst thou

thou expect better treatment than thy Lord? O remember that the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God: and that what the world censures as foolishness, is indeed true wisdom. Remember that *Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God.* James iv. 4.

Conclude to adhere to thy Lord, in the midst of all his reproaches and sufferings; to embrace his wisdom, hidden under the fool's coat, which the world hath flung over it; and ever to acknowledge him for the true king of thy heart. O beg that his kingdom may be established there, and the reign of sin be totally abolished,

TUESDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

Barabbas is preferred before our Lord. He is scourged at the pillar.

CONSIDER first, how Pilate, seeing our Lord brought back to his tribunal, and the high priest and council still bent upon destroying the innocent, thinks of another way to bring him off, without giving them offence. It was the privilege of the people to have their choice of a prisoner, to be set at liberty, on that day of the paschal solemnity, in memory of their being delivered on that day from the bondage of Egypt. He proposes therefore to their choice our Saviour on the one hand, and Barabbas, a notorious malefactor, robber, and murderer, on the other: making sure that they would rather chuse to have our Saviour released to them, in whom neither he nor they could find any crime, than Barabbas, the worst of criminals. O eternal Son of God, how low dost thou here stoop for my sins, when thou sufferest thyself to be put in competition with the vilest and most wicked of men; and to have it put to the votes of the rabble which of the two is the most deserving of death! O the unparalleled humility of my Saviour! O the unparalleled injury here offered to him by Pilate, whilst he pretends to favour him! But O! the unparalleled blindness of this

unhappy people, who make choice of Barabbas before their Messias; and demand, with loud cries, that the former may be released, and the latter crucified. See, my soul, in this wonderful humiliation of thy Lord, how deep, how desperate was the wound of thy pride, which could not be healed but by such and so great humility. Learn henceforward, at least, from him, to be humble of heart; and never to think much, if others, how mean soever, be preferred before thee, since Barabbas was preferred before Christ. Alas! how often hast thou thyself preferred something worse than Barabbas, even that ugly monster sin, before this Lord of glory.

Consider 2dly, how, the Jews still insisting, in a tumultuous manner, that our Lord should be crucified, Pilate, in hopes of appeasing them by a kind of composition, and so making them relent, orders him to be cruelly scourged: a torment most grievous to our dear Redeemer, (who therefore, speaking of his passion, takes special notice of it) and at the same time most disgraceful, and most ignominious. Look on now my soul, in spirit, and see in what manner thy Saviour is treated for thee. See how the bloody executioners lay violent hands on this lamb of God: see how they tear off his cloaths, and expose him all naked, before a great multitude, to cold and shame: see how they bind him fast to a stony pillar: see how they discharge upon his sacred back, shoulders, and sides, innumerable stripes, lashes, and scourges: see how his body is all rent, torn, and mangled by their barbarity: see how the blood comes spouting out on all sides. See in his gaping wounds the handy-work of thy sins. O take pity of his mangled flesh; and let the sight of so much blood, shed for thee, mollify thy heart, and determine thee, from this hour, never any more to scourge him by sin. Run in now, and cast thyself at his feet, and bathe thyself in his precious blood: mingle, at least, some few tears with his sacred gore: and repent from thy heart for the share thou hast had in this scourging of thy Lord.

Consider

Consider godly, in this scourging of our Saviour, who this is, that is thus barbarously and ignominiously treated? And why he suffers all this? O my soul, it is the God that made thee: it is the Lord and Maker of heaven and earth, who suffers all this, by his own free choice, for the love of thee: it is to deliver thee, by his sufferings, from the grievous and eternal torments thy sins have deserved; and to purchase for thee everlasting joys, which thou never couldst deserve. O infinite love of my God! O never suffer me, dearest Saviour, to forget what thou hast here endured for the love of me! But see in what manner our Lord suffers all this barbarous usage? Without resistance; without complaint; in silence; with a perfect resignation and conformity to the will of his Father: in perfect charity; praying for his enemies, whilst they stand by, insulting over him, and rejoicing at his torments. My soul, let us study well; and learn these lessons of our suffering Redeemer.

Conclude to make the best acknowledgment thou art able of the love thy Saviour has shewed thee in his sufferings, by a return of thanksgiving and love; and by a constant detestation of sin, as his and thy mortal enemy, and the occasion of all his sufferings.

WEDNESDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

Our Lord is crowned with thorns.

CONSIDER first, how the barbarous ruffians, being wearied at last with scourging our Lord, untie him from the pillar, all covered with wounds; and with his strength quite exhausted by the loss of so much blood: and now, whilst they rest themselves, they leave him to seek out, and to pick up his cloaths, which they had scattered about, and to put them on, as well as he can: for he is so stiff and weak, so mangled by their barbarity, as to be but little able to help himself; and he has no friend at hand to help him. But O how ill do these rough woollen cloaths suit with his green wounds! how does the rubbing of them, at every step, or motion, en-

crease the smart? But now, behold my soul, another scene of barbarity, not to be paralleled in all history; acted by these bloody soldiers, in crowning our Lord for a king, by a most cruel mockery; and sporting themselves in his sufferings. To perform this tragical ceremony with more solemnity, they drag our Saviour into the court of the governor's hall, and assemble the whole regiment about him: then they strip him again of all his garments, which now were beginning to stick to his wounds; which they rend, and widen by this violence. See, my soul, how thy Lord now stands, as a lamb, in the midst of innumerable wolves: see how, from head to foot, he is embrued in blood: see at how dear a rate he has purchased thy redemption.

Consider 2dly, what a throne, what royal robes, what a crown, what a sceptre, these wretches have provided for the Lord of glory. See, my soul, how they make him sit down on some dirty stool for a throne, and how they throw about him for his royal robes, an old ragged purple garment, to the great annoyance of his wounded back, shoulders, and arms. After this, they press down on his sacred head, a twisted wreath of long, hard, and sharp thorns, for a royal diadem or crown: then they put into his hand, for a sceptre, a reed, or a cane. And having thus arrayed him, they come and kneel before him, in mockery, to pay him their homage; saluting him scornfully, with a *Hail, King of the Jews:* and then, by turns, they buffet him, spit in his face, and strike him over the head, with the sceptre they had given him; and by that means drive the thorns deeper in; whilst the blood trickles down apace from the numberless wounds which he receives from their points. Ah! who shall be able to number the multitude and variety of sufferings, which our Lord endured upon this occasion: in which it is hard to say whether the torment or the ignominy and disgrace was the more intolerable! Yet our dear Lord bore all in patience and silence for the love of us.

Consider 3dly, and take a view at leisure of our Saviour sitting on this stool of ignominy, in the midst of this

this whole regiment of insolent and barbarous pagan soldiers. Reflect on what he suffers in his sacred head, and temples, from those hard sharp thorns, which pierce his flesh with so many wounds. O! who can conceive the greatness of this torture! See, my soul, how the blood trickles down his face and neck; see the many bruises he receives from the violent blows they give him with their hands: see his divine countenance covered with the filth they cast upon him: see through the ragged purple all the wounds of his mangled body, bleeding plentifully for thy sins; in fine, see how this lawless insulting multitude strive who shall outdo each other in their scoffs, affronts, and injuries; whilst our Lord, on his part, still preserves the same serenity in his countenance, the same tranquillity in his soul, and the same charity in his heart. But, O my soul, whilst thou art contemplating him under all these barbarous mockeries and torments; cast thy eyes upwards, and see him sitting on his throne of glory, adored by all the legions of Angels: and do thou join with them in paying him the best homage thou art able: and ever remember, that the more he has debased himself for thee, the more dear he ought to be to thee.

Conclude by acknowledging thy Saviour, in the midst of all these ignominies; for the true king of thy heart; and begging him to come and establish his throne there. Learn from him to bear, and to submit to, the thorns which are appointed for thee, in this thy mortal pilgrimage. O pretend not to a crown of roses; to a life of worldly pleasures; whilst thy Lord makes choice of a crown of thorns, for the love of thee.

THURSDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

Our Lord is shewn to the people, with Ecce homo! Behold the man.

CONSIDER first, how Pilate, hoping now that the malice of the Jews would be so far abated, as to insist no longer on our Saviour's death, after they should see, in what a barbarous manner he had been

treated, in compliance with their passion; leads him out, just as he was, with his crown of thorns upon his head, and his ragged purple on his shoulders: and, from an eminence, shews him to the people with these words; *Ecce homo*, Behold the man. As much as to say: Take a view of him now from head to foot, see how he is all covered with wounds, how his whole body is rent, torn, and mangled with scourges, his head and temples pierced with bloody thorns, his face all black and blue, and his person quite disfigured. See how cruelly he has been handled, in complaisance to you, though neither I, nor Herod, could find any crime in him. Let then this outrageous treatment he has received from the soldiers, let all this blood he has shed satisfy you; take pity on him now at least, and cease to seek his death. But O! how vain it is to expect that mens passions should be abated by giving way to them! Pilate imagined the sight of so much innocent blood already shed, would extinguish the thirst of the Jews: whereas it did but encrease it, and make them the more eager after our Lord's death. See, my soul, thou never suffer thyself to be imposed upon in the like manner, by thinking to rid thyself the earier hereafter of thy troublesome temptations or passions, by making a kind of composition, and giving them at present what they crave. The more thou givest them, the more they will demand, and the more they will tyrannize over thee. It is not by yielding, but by fighting resolutely against them, thou art to conquer.

Consider 2dly, my soul, thy Saviour presenting himself to thee on this occasion, with all his wounds, and all the disgraceful attire of his ragged robes, and thorny crown; with an *Ecce homo*, behold the man. But see thou look upon him with other eyes than those unhappy miscreants did, who only took occasion from the sight of his sufferings, to cry out more eagerly, *away with him, away with him; crucify him, crucify him*. O! behold the man, even the eternal Word of the Father, made man for the love of thee. Behold his head crowned with a wreath of sharp thorns, piercing and entering in

in on all sides, with excessive pains: behold his face bruised beyond measure, and all covered with blood and spittle: behold, through his ragged purple, the innumerable stripes and wounds of his mangled body. Behold and see to what a condition thy sins, and his own infinite charity have reduced the Lord of glory. Then see and consider what return thou wilt make him, for all his sufferings, and for all his love. He desires no other return but that of thy heart; but then it must be an humble and a contrite heart: it must be a loving and an obedient heart.

Consider 3dly, the eternal Father presenting his Son to us in his passion, all covered with wounds, and embroiled in his blood, with another *Ecce homo*, Behold the man. Setting before our eyes all that he has suffered out of pure love for us; representing to us his infinite goodness and mercy, and the heinousness of our sins and ingratitude to him; encouraging us to hope in him; inviting us to love him, and to detest our sins for the love of him; and offering us all good things through him; only desiring that we would cease to persecute him by sin. O give attention, my soul, to this loving voice of thy God, and to all the sufferings of his Son: but, in return, do thou also present him to his Father with the like *Ecce homo*, Behold the man: laying before him all that his Son has endured for thee, in the whole course of his passion; and putting in thy claim to all that mercy, grace, and salvation, which he has purchased for thee, by all these sufferings. In particular, insist upon this one favour to be granted thee, through his passion and death, that thou mayest never more be disloyal to him.

Conclude, by representing all thy miseries and sins to thy Redeemer, and, through him, to his Father, with another *Ecce homo*, Behold the man: and begging a redress from him, and through his precious blood, of all thy miseries; and the remission of all thy sins.

FRIDAY IN PASSION WEEK.

On the part the blessed Virgin bore in her Son's sufferings.

CONSIDER first, the foresight the blessed Virgin had of the passion of her Son, from the time that she heard that prophetic prediction addressed to her by holy Simeon, *Luke xii. 34, 35.* that he should be set for a sign which should be contradicted; and that a sword should pierce her own soul. Yes, blessed Lady, a sword indeed, far more sharp and penetrating than any earthly steel, which can only pierce the body, and cannot reach the soul; whereas this sword, of more than mortal anguish, which thou sufferest by occasion of the passion of thy Son, inflicts a most bitter, deep and deadly wound, in the very midst of thy soul. A wound, which began to be inflicted at the time of this prophecy, by the sense which the heavenly Father then gave thee, of what thy Son was to suffer; a wound, which was a most bitter alloy of all those consolations which thou receivedst, from the sight, conversation and embraces of thy Jesus; a wound which thou carriedst about with thee in thy soul, all the time of his mortal life; still growing upon thee, as the time of his passion grew nearer; and not healed but by his glorious resurrection. Christians, see how the greatest favours of heaven, by divine appointment, meet with the greatest crosses, in this mortal pilgrimage. But no wonder: Christ himself was first to suffer, and so to enter into his glory: his blessed mother and all the Saints were to walk in the same road, in order to follow him, and to partake in his glorious kingdom. O! think not much if your Lord chuses for you, what he chose for himself, for his blessed mother, and for all his elect.

Consider 2dly, how much the affliction and anguish of this Virgin Lady was encreased, when the news was brought her, of her Son being betrayed by Judas, apprehended, bound, and dragged away, in that inhuman manner, before the council; and what treatment he had met with there, after being condemned by them.

But

But as the sight usually affects us more than the hearing; so doubtless this blessed mother was oppressed with a far more killing grief, when, on the next morning, she was an eye-witness of all the injuries, outrages, and torments, which he suffered in the different stages of his passion. For as no love, that any person upon earth has ever experienced, could any ways approach to the love she bore our Lord, not only as her Son, but much more as her God: so, in proportion to her love, her anguish and sorrow, to see him treated in that cruel, barbarous and outrageous manner, was the greatest that any pure creature could ever sustain; and nothing less than a miracle could support her, or keep her alive, under so dreadful a torture. Ah Christians! the whips, thorns, and nails, that pierced his flesh, pierced her heart with inexpressible pain and sorrow, which none surely could ever exceed, but those of her Son, *the man of sorrows*. O take pity, my soul, on the sorrows of them both, and see thou never more concur to grieve them by sin.

Consider gdly, more in particular, how the Blessed Virgin was affected when she first saw her Son, in the morning, in the hands of his enemies, all disfigured by their blows, with his hands tied behind him, his face covered with spittle, and his hair all rent and torn. O my soul, even so hard a heart as thine, could scarce bear such a sight as this; much less her tender heart! But what was this, in comparison with what she endured when he was so cruelly scourged at the pillar; when he was crowned with piercing thorns, and buffeted by a whole band of soldiers? O what pangs did she suffer, when she saw him presented to the people with the *Ecce homo*, Behold the man! How did she then feel in her soul all those wounds she there discovered in his head and body? Nor did she suffer less, but rather much more, when she followed him in his last journey to mount Calvary, bearing his cross on his mangled shoulders, and marking the way with his sacred blood. But what was all this, if compared with what she endured, when she heard the strokes of the hammers driving the nails

nails into his hands and feet; when she saw him hoisted up into the air, and there hanging extended, as upon a rack, and supported by his wounds; when standing near the cross, she saw the extremity of the torture he there endured: contemplated the multitude, and variety of his sufferings: heard his last dying words, and saw him give up the ghost? O how truly might she then cry out with the prophet, *O all you that pass by the way, attend and see, if there be sorrow like to my sorrow!* Lament. i. 32. Learn, my soul, from this queen of sorrows, with what eye thou oughtest to look upon the sufferings of the Son of God, and how to bewail those sins which have given cause to them.

Conclude to imitate the virtues, of which this blessed Lady has given us an illustrious example, in this martyrdom she endured under the cross of her Son: especially learn her courage and fortitude under such bitter sufferings; her patience and perfect conformity to the will of God; her lively faith and hope. These must support thee also, under all thy crosses.

SATURDAY IN PASSION-WEEK.

Our Lord is condemned to the cross.

CONSIDER first, how the Jews, perceiving that Pilate was bent upon releasing our Saviour, told him, that if he released that man, he could be no friend of Cæsar (the emperor) for whosoever made himself a king, opposed Cæsar. (St. John xix. 12.) See here, my soul, what evils human respects are capable of producing; and how sad a thing it is, either to fear or to love any thing more than God. Pilate's resolution in a moment falls to the ground, upon the apprehension of being accused to Cæsar, and of losing his favour: rather than risk this, he is determined to make a sacrifice of his conscience, in condemning the innocent. Alas! have we never had a share in the like guilt? Has not human fear, or the apprehension of what the world would say, too often influenced us to condemn, at least in fact, our Lord and his doctrine, by mortal sin? Has not

not a much less consideration than the fear of losing the favour of an emperor, prevailed, on these occasions, over our best resolutions? O what hold do we give to the enemy, by these human fears, and by our irregular affections to this cheating world! But see the vain excuses by which men seek to palliate the guilt of their sins; and to salve their conscience: Pilate washes his hands, and cries out; *I am innocent of the blood of this just man: look you to it,* Matt. xxvi. 24. as if this ceremony and verbal declaration, could clear him, in the sight of the just judge, from the guilt of concurring to the death of the innocent. But see also, into what dismal extremities unhappy souls cast themselves, when they are once obstinately bent upon sin, in that dreadful sentence which the Jews pronounced against themselves on that occasion: *His blood be upon us, and upon our children.*

Consider 2dly, how Pilate proceeds to give judgment of death against the Lord of life, and sentences our Saviour to the cross, in compliance with the cry of the whole people, still calling out, in a tumultuous manner, *Crucify him, crucify him.* But O! my soul, reflect that it was the voice of thy crying sins that far more effectually called for the death of the Son of God, than the cry of the Jews: for that tumult could have had no power to bring on his crucifixion; had not he been determined to suffer this kind of death for the expiation of thy sins. But see with what loud huzzas, with what triumph and joy, this sentence is received by the enemies of our Lord, and with what sighs and tears, with what grief and anguish, by his friends; and most especially by his blessed mother. But how does this Lamb of God behave on this occasion? In what manner does he receive this sentence of death? He receives it in silence and peace, with perfect submission and conformity to the will of his Father: he receives it even with joy, out of his infinite charity for us, as the only means of our redemption and salvation. See, my soul, whether thou submittest to thy crosses with the like dispositions.

sitions. Dost thou embrace them as the means of divine appointment to bring thee to heaven?

Consider 3dly, that this sentence of death, pronounced against our Lord; was an act of the highest injustice on the part of Pilate: but highly just on the part of God; in consideration of our sins, which his Son had taken upon himself. And therefore, our Saviour, who was infinitely holy, could not indeed but abhor the crime of Pilate, though he suffered it; but as to the judgment and sentence of his Father, he embraced it, as being most holy and just: he bowed down, and adored it with all the powers of his soul. To teach us, and all that desire to be his disciples, to distinguish, on the like occasions, when we have any thing to suffer from others, between man's injustice, and God's justice: and to receive our sufferings from what hand soever they come, and how unjustly soever, as highly just on the part of God, punishing us, by these instruments, for our sins.

Conclude with thanksgiving to the infinite charity of the Father, who, for the love of us, spared not his own Son; but gave him up for us all, and sentenced him to die; and to the infinite charity of the Son, for embracing so cordially this sentence of death for the love of us. Make an oblation, in return, of thy whole self, both to the Father and to the Son; and desire henceforward to live only for him, who has delivered himself up to death for the love of thee.

N. B. Palm-Sunday being kept in memory of our Saviour's solemn entry into Jerusalem, five days before his passion; to correspond to the devotion of the day, we will here insert a meditation upon that subject, and interrupt the course of the consideration on the passion.

PALM-SUNDAY.

On our Lord's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem.

CONSIDER first, how the time now drawing near, when our Saviour was to offer up himself a sacrifice for the sins of the world; he was pleased to come to the place where he was to compleat this sacrifice. And as, in order to fulfil the ancient figures, he chose that very night for the institution of the passover of the new law, which was set aside for the immolation of the paschal lamb in the old law; and that very day for the redemption of the world, in which God's people had formerly been redeemed from their Egyptian bondage; so also he was pleased to make his entry into Jerusalem, in order to his sacrifice, on the very day on which by the appointment of the law, *Exodus* xii. 3. the lamb was to be brought to town, which was to be sacrificed for the passover. Contemplate here, O Christian soul, the greatness of that love and charity for thee, which pushes thy Saviour forward on this occasion: see the joyful readiness with which he goes to offer up himself to death for the love of thee: admire and adore the dispositions of his providence; who was pleased that the glory of his birth should be hidden in the obscurity of a poor stable in little Bethlehem; whilst he chose for the ignominy of his passion, the great theatre of Jerusalem, and the paschal time, when the whole nation of the Jews was assembled thither.

Consider 2dly, the manner, in which our Lord was pleased to be received on this day, by a solemn procession of the people; strewing their garments in the way, and bearing branches of palm-trees in their hands, to testify his victory over the prince of darkness; and accompanying him with loud acclamations, and Hosannas of joy, to honour him as their king and Messias. See, my soul, if thou art in proper dispositions to join in this triumphal procession, and with a palm-branch in thy hand, to celebrate the victory of thy Lord over death, sin and hell. Alas! with what face canst thou

attend him on this occasion, if thou art still a slave to death, sin, and hell? Reflect also here on the inconstancy of the world; and how little account thou art to make of the esteem and applause of men: when thou seest, how this same people, who on this day received our Lord with these loud Hosannas, and acknowledged him for their king, and their Saviour: five days after, cried out, *away with him: away with him: crucify him: crucify him.*

Consider 3dly, the dispositions of the soul of our Redeemer, in the midst of these honours, and acclamations; and how little he is affected with them. See how, upon this occasion, he weeps over the unhappy Jerusalem, and over every impenitent soul, that like Jerusalem, takes no notice *in this her day, of the things that are for her peace: but lets slip the time of her visitation,* St. Luke xix. 42, 44. Learn from his very triumph, his love of poverty, and his meekness, in the manner of his riding into Jerusalem, upon an ass's colt. Give ear to the prophet (Zach. ix. 9.) *Rejoice—O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy king will come to thee; the just, and the Saviour: he is poor, and riding upon an ass, &c.* O see thou imitate his humility, whilst thou rejoicest in his victory.

Conclude to honour the triumph of thy Saviour, in the best manner thou art able in the procession of this day. Acknowledge him for the king and Lord of thy heart, and invite him in thither. But see that sin and hell have no place there.

MONDAY IN HOLY-WEEK.

Our Saviour carries his cross.

CONSIDER first, how, upon Pilate's pronouncing sentence against our Lord, they immediately proceed to execution: and first they strip him of his purple robe, and cloath him again with his own garments: then they bring him the cross, which he was to carry on his shoulders to mount Calvary, as Isaac formerly did the wood, upon which he was to be offered in sacrifice,

But

But O ! who can express, or conceive, the affection of soul, with which our Saviour embraces this cross; which he is now going to consecrate with his precious blood : this cross designed to be the happy instrument of our redemption; the altar of his sacrifice ; the throne of his mercy ; the trophy of his victory ; the eternal monument of his love ; the refuge of sinners ; the comfort of the afflicted ; the glory of his elect ; the school of all virtues, and the source of all our good. O my soul, what are thy sentiments with regard to the cross of Christ ? Thou must embrace the cross with him, if thou desirest to reign with him. Give ear to a great servant of God, expressing his affection to the cross, in this pathetic manner. ‘ I bow down to thee, O precious cross, consecrated by the embraces, and by the blood of Jesus, my Lord, and my king. I look upon thee as the standard of his armies; as the watch tower shewing forth its light, to guide his elect, in this stormy ocean ; as the defence of his servants ; and as the mark and badge of his children. I adore thee, O hidden wisdom ! O light unknown to the world ! the honour of them that follow thee, the safety of them that carry thee, the crown of them that embrace thee, the reward of them that love thee, and the salvation of them that cast themselves into thy arms. To die on thee is to live, and to live on thee is to reign. He that loves thee, is content ; he that desires thee, is easy ; he that possesses thee, is rich. I bow down to thee, O tree of life, the fruit of which, is the solid food of the children of God. O balance, ever even, in which alone we discover the just value, and the true price of all things.— In thee is found health and life, the victory over hell, the sweets of Paradise, Strength of heart, joy of spirit, perfection of virtue, and assurance of eternal goods, &c. I embrace thee, O holy cross, consecrated by the sweat, and by the blood of my Saviour. Thou shalt be henceforward my refuge, my light, my knowledge, and all my wisdom. Forsake me not, keep not at a distance from me, though this flesh of mine dreads thee, and seeks to fly from thee.—O fasten me to the

' cross with thee, my sweet Jesus, and enlighten me
' with thy admirable light: that my spirit may penetrate
' into the depth of the mysteries, and of the wisdom of
' the cross.' *Sufferings of Jesus*, Chap. xlivi. My soul,
are these thy sentiments?

Consider sadly, and take a view of the Lamb of God, setting out upon this his last, most wearisome, and most painful journey of his mortal life; loaded with the enormous weight of the cross; and with the far more intolerable weight of the sins of the world. See the length, and whole size of the cross, proportioned to bear the weight of a human body suspended in the air; and reflect, how little strength remains in his body, after so many sufferings and fatigues; and the loss of so much blood. Ah! how rough, how hard, how insupportable then, is this load, to his shoulders and back, all mangled, rent and torn with the whips and scourges! How does it press upon his green wounds, and squeeze out his sacred blood all the way! O mark this his last procession. A crier leads the way publishing his pretended crimes and blasphemies: then follow the soldiers and executioners, with ropes, hammers, nails, &c. And after them goeth, or rather creepeth along, our high priest and victim, all bruised and bloody; and staggering under the burthen of his cross: attended with a thief on each hand; and surrounded with a multitude of his enemies, insulting over him, and loading him with scoffs, reproaches, and curses; whilst the cruel executioners, at every turn, are hastening him forward with their kicks and blows. Follow thy Lord, my soul, in this his last and most painful procession: offer him what service thou canst, to ease him of some part of his burthen; weep over him, at least, with the good women that followed him: but take notice of his admonishing them, rather to weep for themselves, and for their children: and see how, in the midst of all his sufferings, he is much more concerned for our miseries and sins, than for any thing he himself endures. O! blessed be his infinite charity for us poor sinners.

Consider

Consider 3dly, how our Lord having for some time, with unspeakable labour and torment, carried his cross through the streets; at last falleth down under the enormous weight of it, unable to carry it any longer. But with what a shock does he fall! with what an additional torture to his wounded body; now quite exhausted with pain and labour, and loss of blood! See how the bloody executioners employ their kicks and blows, to oblige him to rise again with his burthen: but all in vain; his strength is quite gone; he is not able to carry it any farther. Therefore, lest his execution should be delayed, they lay hold on Simon of Cyrene, whom they met coming out of the country, and they oblige him to take up the cross, and to ease our Lord of part of the burthen, by carrying it after him. But O! who shall ease him of any part of that other load, infinitely more insupportable, which his heavenly Father has laid upon him, of the sins of the whole world! My soul, do thou give him what little ease thou canst, by lamenting the share thy sins have in this tragedy, and by ceasing henceforward to afflict him by sin.

Conclude to run in, and offer thy service to thy Redeemer, on this occasion, to take up his cross for him, and to help him, like Simon of Cyrene, in the carriage of it: or rather offer thyself to him, to take up thy own cross, with perfect resignation and patience, and to follow him. It is this he particularly calls for, and expects at thy hands.

TUESDAY IN HOLY-WEEK.

Our Saviour is nailed to the Cross.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, being at length arrived at mount Calvary, quite wearied and spent; the untired malice of his enemies, pursuing him still, finds out a new torture for him, by mingling gall with the wine, that, according to custom, was presented as a strengthening draught, to criminals that were to be executed. Our Lord, that he might suffer the more for us, was pleased by tasting it to embitter his palate,

parched up before with a violent thirst; but he would not admit of the comfort, that the drinking of it might have afforded his stomach, *When he had tasted, he would not drink*, St. Matt. xxvii. 34. And now they strip him violently of his cloaths, which by this time began to cleave fast to his mangled body; being pressed into the wounds by the weight of the cross; so that all his wounds are now opened afresh, and the Lamb of God is in a manner flayed alive, in order to be laid on the altar of the cross. O! my soul, see how he stands, all covered with his blood, with his eyes lifted up to heaven; with infinite charity praying for poor sinners; and even for his very executioners. O! run in now, and cast thyself at his feet; and bathe thyself in that precious blood, which he so plentifully sheds for thee: but see thou mingle with it thy penitential tears, in consideration of the share thou hast had, in bringing these sufferings upon him, by thy sins.

Consider 2dly, how all things being now ready, they order him to lay down upon the cross. He obeys without resistance or demur, and lays himself down upon this hard bed, on which he is to die; this bed of sorrow, on which he is to bring us forth to God. Here he lies, with his eyes fixed on heaven, as high priest of all mankind, offering himself a victim of propitiation for our sins, to his eternal Father; and freely giving up his hands and feet to the executioners, to be pierced with the nails. See now, my soul, how one of these ruffians comes with a large sharp nail, and fixing the point of it upon the sacred palm of one of our Saviour's hands, violently drives it with his hammer into the tender flesh, forcing its way, with inconceivable torment, through the nerves, sinews, muscles, and bones, of which the hand is composed, deep into the hard wood of the cross. The extremity of pain, which was caused by the violent piercing of so many nerves and bones, as meet in the hands, made all the nerves and sinews shrink up, and draw the body towards that hand that was nailed: so that great violence was used by the executioners, in dragging the other arm and hand to the opposite side,

to

to the place prepared for it: where they served it in like manner. And then, with equal barbarity, they drew down his sacred feet, and nailed them also to the cross. Verifying that of the prophet, *Ps. xxi.* *They have dug my hands and feet: they have numbered all my bones:* inasmuch as, by the violence of their pulling, the bones of our Lord were so drawn from their places, and disjointed, that they might be numbered. Ah! sweet Saviour, who can conceive the least part of what thou hast here endured for the love of me?

Consider gdlly, what shocks, what tortures, our Lord, being now nailed fast to the cross, must have suffered in his whole body, when they dragged the cross along the ground, to the hole prepared for it: how much, when they began with ropes to raise him up into the air; how much, when they let the foot of the cross fall with a jolt into the hole; how much, when they fastened it in the ground, with large stakes, which they drove in with their mallets. O! who can think, without horror, on the racking pains that every motion or shock of this nature must have caused to a body all disjointed, and supported only by the bones and sinews of the hands and feet, pierced through with gross nails! But though this torture, which our Lord here endured, was so great and insupportable, that one would think it might have moved the hardest heart to compassion, to have seen even a brute beast undergo so much: yet such was the insatiable malice of the enemies of our Saviour, that instead of shewing him any pity, or relenting at the sight of his torments, they shout and triumph, when they see him appear above the heads of the people; and drawing nigher, they stand shaking their heads at him, rejoicing at all his sufferings, scoffing, and insulting over him. Christians, whilst you detest this Jewish malice, see you have no share in it, by your obstinacy in sin; *cru-tifying again to yourselves the Son of God, and making a mockery of him,* *Heb. vi. 6.*

Conclude, by detesting the handywork of your sins, which have nailed your Saviour to the cross; and by loving him, who out of pure love for you has endured

so much. O! that we could say here with the martyr Ignatius, and with the like affection: *My love is fastened to the cross.*

WEDNESDAY IN HOLY-WEEK.

On the sufferings of our Saviour upon the Cross.

CONSIDER first, what our Lord suffers upon the cross, for the whole time that he continues living upon it, till he consummates his sacrifice. Draw near, my soul, and sit down under the shadow of thy true lover, with a longing desire to be his scholar in this school of love. Contemplate at leisure the multitude and variety of his sufferings. And first, as to his sacred body; see how *from the sole of the foot, to the top of the head, there is no soundness therein*; see how it is all covered with wounds and blood. O how rough is this hard bed of the cross to a body all torn and mangled! O how uneasy is this pillow of a thorny crown to his wounded head! See all the cruel bruises, with which his divine face is disfigured; and reflect on the smart and the pain of them. See how the whole body is violently stretched, and extended as upon a rack, with an inexpressible torture in all the joints and limbs. But, above all, remark those four streams of blood, those fountains of Paradise, that flow from the four most painful wounds of his hands and feet; and consider how the whole weight of the body, hanging by those gross nails, that pierce the nerves and bones, whilst it naturally sinks downwards, is continually rending and tearing his wounds, and increasing his pains.

Consider 2dly, what our Saviour suffers interiourly in his soul, and thou shalt find it to be much more insupportable than all he endures in his body. Witness the inexpressible horror he has for the sins of the world, all now lying upon him, and oppressing his soul with their infinite weight: his deep sense of those blasphemies, he hears uttered against the Deity; and the contempt they shew for his person, and his divine truths. Witness the anguish of his soul, to see the hardness, blindness,

blindness, and reprobation, of his once chosen people the Jews; together with the final impenitence of Judas: and the eternal damnation of so many millions of souls, for whom he is now offering himself in sacrifice; every one of whom he loves more than his own life. Add to this, his grief to see the unspeakable desolation of his blessed mother, and of all his friends; and himself left, without any manner of relief or comfort, from any creature whatsoever; and even forsaken by his heavenly Father, and given up to the will and pleasure of his enemies. Ah! Christians, no tortures can be comparable to those of the soul!

Consider 3dly, that, besides these sufferings, both of body and soul, which our Lord endures on the cross, for the love of us; he is pleased, moreover, to suffer in all other ways, which any mortal can be liable to in this life. He suffers in his honour, by the disgrace of being hanged between two thieves, and loaded with all kinds of reproaches and affronts: he suffers in his reputation, by outrageous calumnies and impositions: he suffers in his goods, by being stript of his very cloaths, (the all he had in this world) and exposed naked to shame and cold: he suffers from all sorts of people; from Jews and Gentiles; great and small; priests and laity; all conspiring, as much as they can, to add to his afflictions. His enemies insult, and triumph over him; his friends are ashamed of him: those whom he had favoured with his miracles declare against him; his disciples keep at a distance, and are afraid of being involved in his punishments. His eyes see nothing but what may add to his anguish; his ears are entertained with nothing but injuries and blasphemies; his palate is afflicted with a mortal thirst; and his own body, by its weight, is a continual and most grievous torment to him. O sweet Jesus, how dearly hast thou paid for my sins!

Conclude to station thyself at the foot of the cross; and there to contemplate in the sufferings of thy Saviour, the enormity of thy sins, and the goodness of thy God: that thou mayest there learn, how thou art to detest thy sins, and to love thy God.

HOLY-

H O L Y - T H U R S D A Y.

On our Saviour's preaching from the Cross.

CONSIDER first, that the whole life and doctrine of Christ was a continual lesson to his followers, to renounce self-love, with its three wretched branches: *viz. the lust of the flesh*, that is, the love of sensual pleasures: *the lust of the eyes*, that is, the love of the perishable goods of this world: and *the pride of life*. These are the unhappy sources of all our evils, which withdraw us from our allegiance to God; and make us exchange the fountain of life for poisonous puddles, that can never satisfy our thirst. These are the foundations of a worldly and sinful life; and the broad road to death and hell. Alas! we love ourselves, and our own will more than God; we are ever full of ourselves; sensual, covetous, presumptuous, as if we were something; and we can bear with nothing, that opposes or contradicts us. But mark, in particular, my soul, the sermon which the Son of God preaches from the cross; and see how loudly he there condemns, from that pulpit, all the illusions of our self-love, with all the maxims and practices of the world, and the unhappy attachment of worldlings to their carnal and sensual affections. O! Remember, that what he suffers is all by his own choice; and this not only to the end that he may expiate our sins, but also in order to undeceive us in the preposterous judgment we make of things; and to teach us to embrace what he embraces, to despise what he despises, and to condemn what he condemns. Learn then, my soul, at the foot of the cross, to overcome thy pride, by the great example of the voluntary humiliations of the Son of God; thy love of the world, by his voluntary poverty, and by his being stript of all things, and abandoned by all; and thy love of pleasure, by his voluntary sufferings and inexpressible torments.

Consider 2dly, that Jesus Christ, in offering himself upon the cross, a sacrifice to his Father, without any manner

manner of reserve; and in dying in pure obedience to his heavenly will; preaches another excellent sermon to us, containing the whole perfection of a spiritual life; which consists in giving our whole selves to God; and in being obedient unto death. Yes, Christians, if you desire to be perfect, you must learn of your dying Saviour, to make this offering of yourselves without reserve, to his Father, and to your Father: you must join your offering with his; and make it by his hands, that it may be acceptable. You must make it every day, and oftentimes in the day. O! Give him then daily your soul and body; give him your understanding, your memory, and your will; give him your whole being, with all that belongs to it, both for time and eternity: and he will give his whole self to you. O happy exchange! Offer yourself then daily to do for him, whatsoever he pleases; to suffer for him, whatsoever he pleases; dedicate yourselves eternally to his love; and resolve to die a thousand deaths, rather than to forfeit in any thing, the obedience you owe to this your Father, Maker, King, and God.

Consider 3dly, the particular lessons, that our Lord also gives us, in his seven last dying words upon the cross. 1. Of *perfect charity* to our enemies; by his praying for his, and excusing them to his Father: *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.* 2. Of *mercy* and *compassion* for sinners; by the plenary indulgence he imparts to the penitent thief. *Amen. I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.* 3. Of *duty to our parents*. in his recommending his Virgin mother to the care of his beloved disciple; and of a *filial devotion* to her, as recommended for a mother to us all. *Woman, behold thy son.—Behold thy mother.* 4. Of an *earnest thirst* for the conversion and salvation of all men; by that which he expresses in this word, *I thirst.* 5. Of *fervent prayer* to God under anguish and desolation; by the fervour of his prayer: *My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?* 6. Of *perseverance* to the end, till we have *consummated*, that is, compleatly finished, the work for which we came into the world; by that word

word of his, *It is consummated.* 7. Of committing ourselves, both in life and death, by a perfect resignation, into the hands of God, by his great example. *Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit.* O let us learn these last lessons of our dying Lord!

Conclude to frequent daily this school of the cross, if thou wouldest learn to be wise indeed. But more especially take care to study well, at the foot of the cross, those two most essential lessons, the renouncing thy own will, and embracing the will of God, by a resolute conformity and obedience, even unto death.

GOOD-FRIDAY.

On our Saviour's death upon the Cross.

CONSIDER first, how our Lord, having uttered those last words of his, *Father into thy hands I commend my Spirit,* with a loud and strong voice, leans down his head, in perfect submission to his Father's will, and gives up the ghost, to consummate the great sacrifice of the redemption of the world. Stand astonished, my soul, in the contemplation of this incomprehensible mystery, that Life itself should die, to deliver thee from a second death, and to impart to thee eternal life. O! consider well who this is that hangs here dead before thy eyes? The Word, the Wisdom, the Son of the eternal God; the Lord of Glory; the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords; the great Creator of heaven and earth. But O how strangely has he here debased himself! How wonderfully is he here metamorphosed for the love of thee! Draw near, however, in spirit, and cast thyself down at the foot of the cross; and there exercise thyself in acts of faith, hope, love, and contrition for thy sins; there pour forth thyself in the sight of thy God, in acts of adoration, praise, and thanksgiving; there make a total oblation of thyself to thy crucified Saviour, to be his, both in life and death, in time and eternity.

Consider 2dly, how our Lord, in the midst of all the ignominies and torments of his passion and death, begins

gins to reign from the cross: and is even there highly honoured and exalted by his heavenly Father. The title that hangs over his head declares him to be *the King of the Jews*, even their Messias, of whom the prophets had delivered such wonders. All nature loudly proclaims him her king and her God. The sun withdraws his light, for the three whole hours that he hangs upon the cross; at his death the whole earth trembles; the rocks are split; the monuments are opened; the dead arise: the veil of the temple, that hangs before the inward sanctuary, is rent from top to bottom, to shew that the law, and its figures, are all now accomplished, and the sanctuary of heaven laid open. See, my soul, how he already begins from the cross, to verify what he had said, St. John xii. 32. *If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself.* One of the thieves, that were crucified with him, is the first that experiences this miraculous attraction, and in an instant is changed into a Saint: the centurion, or captain of the soldiers, that assisted at the execution, is the next; and loudly declares him to be the Son of God: and *all the multitude of them that were come together to that sight, and saw the things that were done, return striking their breasts,* St. Luke xxiii. 48. O dear Jesus, let my poor heart share also in this mercy; look down upon it now from thy cross, which thou hast chosen for the throne of thy mercy and grace; and be pleased to draw it also to thyself; and to make it wholly thine from henceforth, and for ever.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord, by his death, triumphs over all his enemies. He casts out Satan, the ruler of this wicked world, from his usurped dominions; and binds him up in chains, by greatly abridging all the power of death, sin, and hell: he judges, and condemns the world with all its favourite maxims; he exposes, and pulls down human pride; he shews forth the folly of worldly wisdom, and the vanity and deceitfulness of earthly honours, riches, and carnal pleasures, and of all that is not agreeable to his cross; and he sets up this victorious standard for all nations, as the royal ensign

of his kingdom, under which his true soldiers shall ever fight, and triumph over the world, the flesh, and the devil; till they arrive at the crown of life, which he has purchased for them by his death. But see, my soul, how, in the midst of all his triumphs, he invites in a particular manner, all poor sinners to his mercy. See how, with his head bowed down towards them, he offers them the kiss of peace: see how his arms are open to receive them: see how all his gaping wounds invite them, to come and shelter themselves there from the divine wrath. O let us embrace these his offers of mercy, on this day of mercy!

Conclude to celebrate, on this day, in the best manner thou art able, thy Saviour's victory over sin and hell. Adore him most profoundly under all the ignominy of his cross, acknowledge him for thy king, for the true king of thy heart, and beg that he would henceforward abolish the reign of sin in thee. Embrace with all thy affection the sacred wounds of his passion, and chuse them for the place of thy habitation for ever.

H O L Y S A T U R D A Y.

On our Saviour's burial.

CONSIDER first, how after our Lord had expired upon the cross, one of the Soldiers opened his side with a spear, making a wide and deep wound, out of which there presently issued forth blood and water, to wash and cleanse us from all our stains. See, my soul, how the heart of thy Saviour is now laid open for thee. O! enter into it, in spirit, through this gate: and make it thy dwelling-place for evermore. Consider in this mysterious blood and water, issuing from the side of our Lord, the heavenly sacraments, which issue from his wounds, (inasmuch as they have all their virtue from his sacred passion) but especially the sacrament of his body and blood, and that of the sacred laver of baptism. See also here, how our second Adam being now cast into the deep sleep of death, his side is opened, to form from thence his church, designed to be his everlasting bride.

Consider

Consider 2dly, how Joseph of Arimathea (who before durst not declare himself a disciple of Christ) having obtained leave of Pilate, to take away his body, for decent burial; being accompanied with Nicodemus; and joined in this last duty with St. John, and other disciples, un-nailed the sacred body, and took it down from the cross. Run in, Christian soul, in spirit, and offer thy service upon this occasion; receive into thy arms the dead corpse of thy Redeemer; and lay it on the sacred lap of his Virgin Mother: and learn from her whole comportment at this melancholy ceremony, the sentiments of a most affectionate devotion, towards the passion and death of her son. Join in embalming thy Saviour's body; and wrapping it up in clean linen, and laying it in a new monument: by learning the exercise of those virtues, which are signified by those aromatical spices and perfumes; and by that clean linen, and new monument. Especially whenever thou approachest to the body of our Lord, in the blessed sacrament, see thou take along with thee the sweet odours of devotion, a pure conscience, and the cleanness of the new man.

Consider 3dly, how our Lord, lying now in his monument, verifies that of the Psalmist, Ps. lxxxvii. *I am counted among them that go down to the pit: I am become as a man without help, free among the dead. Like the slain sleeping in the sepulchres, whom thou rememb'rest no more: and they are cast off from thy hand. They have laid me in the lower pit; in the dark, and in the shadow of death, Thou hast put away my acquaintance far from me, &c.* yes, my soul, thy Saviour lies now shut up, in a lone-some monument, in darkness, like one dead for always: and as such is left and forsaken by his living friends and acquaintance. See thou leave him not: but stay with him; and watch at his sepulchre in prayer. Weep there over him; with tears of compassion for his sufferings, of compunction for all thy sins, and of a tender love for his infinite goodness, and his love for thee.

Conclude to keep thyself always near to thy Saviour, by daily meditating on his life and death; and thou mayest confidently hope, that he will always be near thee, both in life and death,



